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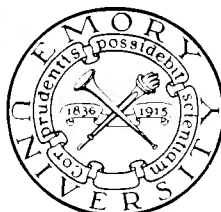
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# A GOLDEN HEART.

A Novel.

By TOM HOOD,

AUTHOR OF "THE LOST LINK," &c. &c.

**NEW EDITION.**

LONDON :

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# A GOLDEN HEART.

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## CHAPTER I.

### MY HERO IN A WHEELBARROW—AND IN LOVE.

POLVREHAN stood at the loveliest point in the lovely valley of the Rella, a beautiful stream that hurries along, now flashing white and silver over broad slabs and boulders, now seemingly sleeping in dark deep pools, while on either side rise the hills, their sides clothed with fir plantation and oak coppice, climbing at times with abrupt steepness from the water's edge, but now and then falling back to leave little amphitheatres of luxuriant greensward, or beds of osier and sallows. The house was situated in the elbow of a sharp angle made by the stream, so that it looked along two lovely valleys. A natural platform on the hill-side gave ample space for the buildings and for a tolerably large bit of garden, artfully enlarged by terraces cut in front to the very verge of a sheer descent to the river.

At the back of the house the road swept round the side of the hill, to a little hollow in which nestled the village of Mer-rimeet, snugly sheltered from the winds that came sweeping across the wide moors, which stretched away behind and above it to the North Coast, against whose precipitous rocky walls the long rollers of the vast Atlantic dashed ceaselessly in vain.

Polvrehan was a snug little estate, with a delicious old house, long-roofed, low-ceilinged, with quaint gables, and mossy thatch, with great black beams and brown wainscoting, with carved chimneys and massive balustrades. It had been

in the possession of the Carlyons from time immemorial, for although not a distinguished family theirs was an old one.

The remote and almost insular position of Cornwall had—until late years when the railway, that great civiliser, but also great destroyer of romance, took possession of it—preserved many institutions that have elsewhere perished. One relic of old feudalism it retained in a class of “squireens,” who by virtue of being “The Somethings of Tre, Pol, or Pen Something,” held a right divine to do nothing but idle, and tope, and run into debt and dissipation. They had just enough money to live upon at ease, and no more education, as a rule, than the farmers with whom they associated with a semi-condescension.

The Carlyon estates were extensive estates for a family of the “squireen” class, but the acres that sounded so well in a description of the property, consisted for the most part of moorland, which produced little besides snipes, curlews, granite posts for the gates, and scanty feed for a few cows and “the squire’s” hunter. For though there was not much hunting to be had, “the squire” was always addicted to the sport, and would ride miles to a meet, with a pasty and brandy flask in his pocket.

The history of the Carlyons repeats itself. The eldest son was always brought up as “the young squire,” was petted, and courted, and grew up on the model of his father. The younger sons were sent into the world early to shift for themselves, and sometimes so far overcame the disadvantages of their birth and breeding as to turn out hard-working and respectable men. The young squire, meanwhile, coming to man’s estate—and his father’s property—would generally marry, and, as a rule, marry some buxom daughter of a neighbouring farmer—a wholesome robust country girl, who, though she assumed the airs of “squire’s lady,” could no more conceal thereby her real extraction than she could poison the healthy blood she infused into the family. But no long succession of Blowsalinda mothers could avert from the race the ultimate curse entailed on it by idleness, drunkenness, and dissipation.

At the time when my story begins the last Carlyon of the elder branch died a childless, half-witted, old man, at barely eight-and-twenty.

George Carlyon, the next heir, thus came into the property somewhat unexpectedly, for there had been several claimants between his cousin and himself, but they had dropped off unnoticed, so little were their chances of succession regarded.

George had been educated for an engineer, and had, though



it must be owned rather by natural aptitude than by application, shown considerable promise, and bade fair to rise high in his profession—when, suddenly, what his friends called “his good luck” befell him, and he was called on to relinquish industry and betake himself to idleness. The Carlyon blood was strong in him, and he was by no means averse to ease and indolence, and therefore took very kindly at first to the life of a squire.

But George Carlyon was town-bred, and he had none of the resources which the country-born idler could have found to drive off the blue devils. He didn’t hunt, or shoot, or fish, and he knew nothing of the management of a farm.

He tried marriage, but with no great success. The wife he selected was too noble a woman for him. Why she married him is not easy to say. But then the wisest and best women commit one folly in their lives, and, as a rule, that folly is their marriage; so that Mrs. Carlyon was no exception to the general rule. When her children were born—two girls—she devoted her whole life to them, and found in their society some recompense for the misery she suffered with her husband. What that misery was I am about to tell you.

Finding that his marriage rather decreased than added to his comfort, George Carlyon cast about for some pursuit that would occupy without engrossing his time. Further west in the country, he found that mines were springing up in all directions, and it occurred to him that by establishing an engine foundry he might find as much employment as he wanted—and what was more, make a considerable sum of money.

With this view he invested all the capital he had—and, in addition, all he could raise on the estate of Polvrehan—in this scheme. The speculation was a very good one indeed, and fully justified such a step, for in a very few years it had realised more than enough to clear off all encumbrances. Unluckily, George Carlyon did not employ his profits for any such wise purpose—indeed, would have raised further money on Polvrehan, if he could have mortgaged what was still free, but who would have lent him anything on that rugged, uncultivated moorland?

At first he had a little store of accumulated activity to bestow on his undertaking, and superintended the works himself. Under the master’s eye all went well and prosperously, and before long the fame of “Carlyon and Co.” had spread far and wide in the county. Every new mine that was opened was supplied by Carlyon and Co. with engines; and when a fresh shaft was sunk in any of the old mines, it was Carlyon

and Co. that set up the additional engine. Now it is the custom in Cornwall, whenever an engine is set to work for the first time, to call together shareholders and all concerned, besides a great many who are not concerned, and give a feast of some sort, with champagne flowing at the high table, and plenteous spirits and water at the lower boards. As a matter of course, the engineer is one of the invited, and a place among the guests most honoured was always reserved for "Muster Carlyon," around whom the generous, hospitable Cornishmen rallied in force, for, as they said, "he be one of we, though he were addicted to Lunnnon." There was a mighty clanship always among these western folk.

As the foundry grew to be firmly established, and as George's stock of energy began to run low, he ceased to take any great immediate interest in the management, going over to the foundry at intervals, and inspecting it very cursorily. But he never missed any of the festivities that were connected with it. No engine was ever set to work that George Carlyon did not see the first stroke of; and at the feast which followed he was ever one of the latest, as well as the liveliest sitters.

The old Carlyon blood was beginning to work. As he used to ride away from these meetings helter skelter over the moors, the country folk would look after him and say he was "one of the old sort"—"A Carlyon, and no mistake!"—and feel a sort of rough pride in him; for when he first took to the foundry work some of his neighbours began to look on him as a lost man, and shake their heads, saying he was the first Carlyon of Polvrehan who had gone into business. Poor Mrs. Carlyon saw her husband growing day by day more hopelessly a prey to evil habits—sinking lower and lower to the level of his associates. But she had never held sufficient influence over him to be able to exert it now with any effect. Her interference only caused a wider estrangement, and made the home more desolate. She therefore gave up the task as a bad one, and devoted all her energies to keep her children in ignorance of their father's fault. She did not live long to do even that.

I am, however, somewhat anticipating. My story really begins about three years after George's marriage, when the foundry had not been long established, and just after the birth of his second child.

George Carlyon was leaning on the gate of Polvrehan, smoking a cigar in the cool of the evening, when Peter Roskilly, an old man who acted as a sort of bailiff for George, passed by with his barrow.

"What's the bundle you've got in your barrow, Roskilly?"

"'Tis a chiel, Sir, as I've 'dopted—my sister's chiel, Sir, what's left a widder."

"What sex, Peter?"

"Well, the father of 'un was Dissentin,' I reckon, but——"

"That's a curious sex, anyhow! I mean is it a boy or a girl?"

"Oh, be sure, Sir—ax yer pardon! 'Tis a boy; and a main fine lad ur is too for's age."

"How old is he then?"

"Well, about of a three, I reckon, Sir. Ur was born the same year as you broft yer good lady home, for I mind I was up here to work when my missus come and says as Polly had gotten a baby."

"But you've children of your own, Peter."

"Ees, sure, Sir. Both of 'em 'arnin', too, so we can spare a bit an' sup for the poor thing. I reckon I'm like the old hen, Sir, I'm bound to scratch all day long, whether 'tis for one chick or a dozen."

"Well, Peter, you're a brave chap, and as soon as the lad can run of errands or do anything of that kind I'll give him work down to foundry."

"Thank'ee, Sir, I'll make bold to remind yer honour of that when the lad's fitten for work."

"So do, Peter."

"I will, Sir. Good-night to 'ee!"

"Good-night, Peter."

This promise of Mr. Carlyon's was not forgotten, either by Peter Roskilly or his wife, and they dinned it into the lad's ears from morning until night. No wonder, therefore, that as soon as he was trusted to run about by himself he spent most of his time at the foundry, where the men treated him kindly, and where he picked up a taste for mechanics and some insight into the work for which he was destined. He was a sharp shrewd lad, with a grave thoughtful face—and the workmen, to whom of course he confided the story of Mr. Carlyon's promise, all agreed that James Trefusis was born to be a great engineer, and would reflect credit on the foundry.

Mr. Carlyon's promise was not forgotten. As soon as the lad was old enough he was found employment at the works, and he rose as he grew older from one post to another, until he became, as a young man, the chief clerk and right-hand of the manager. By that time the foundry was fully established, and was a most prosperous concern. George Carlyon himself, it is true, seldom took any active share in the management, but he had a thoroughly competent, and, what was more, a thoroughly honest man for a manager, and the business was

carried on quite as well as it was when he himself had personally superintended it. It was carried on far better than it would have been if he had attempted to conduct it now, for the effects of dissipation were already observable in him—in his features as in his habits.

He was always giving parties now—indeed, he kept open house, as all the loafers round about Polvrehan for miles knew well; and they did not fail to avail themselves of the knowledge, you may be sure. In this way the profits of his business were frittered away, and although he was a rich man, and had credit for greater wealth than he possessed, George Carlyon's estate remained encumbered still.

His wife had been dead some four years now. She only lived long enough to see her two girls ripen into womanhood, and then she passed away, scarcely regretted by her husband, but bitterly lamented and woefully missed by her daughters. Fortunately for them Mrs. Carlyon, for several years before her death—as soon, in fact, as her husband began to extend such lavish and injudicious hospitality to all comers, gave up one end of the house entirely to him and his boon companions, retiring with the girls to the portion of the house furthest from the entrance, in order to keep them as much as possible from any contact with those who, as she told them, came on business, and whom their father was bound to entertain, but was not obliged to introduce to his family.

James Trefusis had always been a great favourite with Mrs. Carlyon, and never came over from the foundry to report progress to George without being asked to go and see her, and tell her how he was getting on. She used to lend him books and papers, and gave him excellent advice about his reading and studies—for James Trefusis found out very early that he should not get on as he wished to do without education—and having established that fact, at once set sturdily to work to make up for lost time. Self-education, however, is no easy task, and the best intentions and desires may only lead to waste of time without some kindly directing, such as Mrs. Carlyon was able to give him.

Peter Roskilly, the kind uncle who had been a father to James, was an infirm old man now, and it was the lad's turn to support him. He did so without a murmur, though Peter had two sons of his own, who would not raise a finger to help the poor old fellow. Peter had served George Carlyon long and faithfully, and he should have done something to guard his old servant against want in his declining days; but though he spoke of Peter with maudlin affection, and pressed drink upon him on every occasion, George never pensioned

him, and so James had to support him out of his own wages, which were fair enough for a young single man, but not too much for him and Peter.

But James never murmured, and bore the burden nobly, though, as old Peter used to say, "Eh, lad, a youngster like to thee should be maintainin' a wife and childer, not an old chap like me."

I have no doubt there were several pretty girls in Merrimeet who were of the same opinion as Peter. But they never got kiss or compliment from James Trefusis, though he was civil enough to all, old and young, and no one was ever heard to accuse him of being "set-up along of his favour wi' squire, and squire's good lady."

When the squire's good lady was carried to her last resting-place in the little churchyard of Merrimeet, James was one of the bearers. There was no one who mourned for her more deeply, for she had been a kind friend and benefactress to him. A few weeks before her death he had met her in her wheel-chair, in which she was dragged about the lanes, having become too weak to walk about. She bade him good-bye, as she said, for the last time probably, and entreated him to look after his master's interests, and those of her two girls, as far as lay in his power.

"Now I'm going, James, there'll be no one to look after the girls, for your master is otherwise engaged. And I know he cannot find time to attend to business even as he should; but as long as you are at the foundry, I know you'll not see him wronged or cheated."

James quite understood all that she would have said to him, and promised to attend faithfully to her wishes.

"Good-bye, James! God bless you."

He stooped down over her hand and touched it with his lips, and that was the last time he saw her.

He had always been on the most friendly terms with the two girls. When Alice made a tiny rockery in her garden on the lower terrace, who but James Trefusis could contrive a miniature cascade over it by bringing down a thread of water from the pond at the back of the house? It was he, too, who found the rarest ferns and heaths from the moor to stock the rockery with. When Marian had a pair of doves given her, who but James Trefusis could build an aviary in a sheltered corner against the wall? It was he, too, who caught the woodpigeons and the thrush and the blackbird to stock the aviary with. These are only two instances out of many in which, as children, the two girls found a firm ally and sympathising friend in James.



When they grew older, and the rockery, and the aviary, and all other toys were laid aside for the maidenly pursuits which their mother encouraged them to adopt, they still had recourse to James for aid. Did Marian want some embroidery cotton, or Alice wish to have some Berlin wool matched—off they went to James, and begged him to do the little commission for them the next time he had occasion to go to the market town, about five miles off. And James always obligingly found that he had most urgent occasion to go there the very next day, and brought the required articles to Polvrehan in the evening.

"Oh, James, how kind of you," would be the exclamation; "but you are sure you didn't go on purpose?"

"Oh, no, Miss Marian," or "Miss Alice," the answer would be. "I had to go there for the foundry," or "to fetch some tools I required," or some other harmless fib of the kind.

Was there nothing more than gratitude to his benefactor in this attention to the wants and wishes of that benefactor's children? Who knows? Suppose, in order to find out, we follow James, as he is returning along the banks of the Rella from some errand of this description. He saunters easily along, for the evening is closing in, and it is pleasant to stroll by the brookside when the rosy sunset streams down the valley, dashing the oaks and firs with crimson, and sprinkling rubies into every water-break and rapid of the Rella.

It is a very still evening, and as he sits down, by-and-by, on a gate, there is hardly a sound to break the silence. He is so deep in a reverie that he is motionless as a statue—so motionless that by-and-by a shining brown otter creeps out of the water a few yards from his feet, and glides away sinuously among the ferns and undergrowth, with a big silvery trout in its cruel snakelike jaws; so motionless that that living jewel, the king-fisher, comes presently to his accustomed fishing-perch, and poises there—as motionless as James—over his own radiant reflection in the stream; so motionless that the swifts come darting to and fro within easy reach, and make lanes through the mist of gnats that pipe and dance perpetually round him.

The hum of insect life, the occasional sharp quick note of one of the birds, and the faint purling of a distant fall, are the only sounds. The leaves barely whisper as they move to the breathing of the soft wind that comes at sunset through the woods and sings lullaby to the flowers; for the daisies are closed now, and the buttercups, and the delicate pink almond scented bindweed has furled its fairy trumpets and gone to sleep for the night. Overhead the sky has deepened to a

violet, in which one star is twinkling into sight. A belated rook glides over the valley, and far away, showing against the last faint gold of sunset, a hawk quivers on outspread pinions over its unconscious quarry.

The light dies down in heaven, and more stars peep out. Bats flit about, and far off up the valley there is the low cry of an owl. Here and there in the bushes the pure pale blue lamp of the glow-worm gleams out. The rubies have disappeared from the stream now, but wherever a star hangs in the sky above it, there dances a slender thread of diamonds on its bosom. And in the distance a faint mist was rising from the Rella, and stole away like a ghost among the darkling stems of the fir trees.

But while all these lonely phenomena of nature's working were passing in front of him, James Trefusis sat as still as a statue, and quite as blind to what was going on before him.

His eyes, to tell the truth, were fixed upon the far-off future. He was dreaming a day-dream. Shall we summon that vision from the ivory gate?

He was picturing himself as a wealthy man. A short time since he had perfected an invention which he believed was to make his fortune. It was a new loom, and a very ingenious piece of mechanism too. James had not contented himself with merely studying the steam-engine. He had extended his labours to every branch of mechanics, and as far as his opportunities allowed him had read up every kind of manufacture. This new loom, he dreamed, had only to be seen to be adopted immediately—it was so simple and so certain in its working. And then would come prosperity—and position!

What had come to this young man, so contented hitherto to live humbly, and share his fortunes with his aged and infirm uncle in this quiet corner of the world? What had inspired him with these ambitious longings for money and distinction?

As he rouses himself from his reverie, and springs down from the gate, he murmurs to himself: "And then I need not be ashamed to tell her I love her!"

"Yes! Love is the father of ambition very often, indeed—though, of a truth, the son not seldom lives long enough to thrust out the father altogether. James is in love, and hence all these wild dreams of his; and from the wildness of those dreams we can argue that the object of his love is some one whose place in this world is a little above his. Who can she be?"

He is bringing—as I told you when we first found him sitting on the gate here — a little parcel for one of the young ladies at Polvrehan, from the market town. It may be embroidery cotton or Berlin wool, or twenty other feminine necessities. It is a little paper parcel, and it is directed to “Miss Marian Carlyon.”

As James walks away from the gate where he has been sitting he takes that little parcel from his pocket, and kisses it where the name is written. It is a very foolish action, is it not? But then, my dear reader, if you have ever been in love — and if you haven't I decline to have anything to say to you — you have done things quite as foolish twenty times in your life, or else you do not really know the pleasant pains of this tender passion.

I don't think we can any of us come into court with a very good grace to laugh at poor James Trefusis, as he reverently lifts the little packet to his lips. At rare intervals only is it his good fortune to touch her hand; and what exquisite happiness that is to him. He only dares to make love to her by proxy. He worships the flowers she tends—the inanimate objects she touches—the ground she treads. And with all this love in his heart, which is for ever struggling with him as if it were a demon in possession, which is ever urging him to fling himself at her feet and declare himself, he has, poor Spartan, to wrap himself in a cloak of cold and distant respect.

No wonder that here, under the darkling sky, in the dusky woods, with no witnesses but the stars and the stream, which seems to have a tone of pity for him in its voice, he raises the packet to his lips, as a weary pilgrim raises some holy relic, and murmurs over it the name of the sweet saint so far above him, to whom his passionate soul would fain climb.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE STORY OF AN INVENTION—AND A DISCOVERY.

MARIAN CARLYON was sitting in a low beehive chair, under the verandah in front of the breakfast-room window, at Polvrehan. She was employed in some of the thousand artifices with cotton and needles which go by the name of fancy work among ladies, but which to all men, who are not pet curates, appear to be only elaborated idleness.

Alice was sitting at the piano, running her pretty white fingers over the keys, and bursting out every now and then into little snatches of song, like a happy bird that warbles for very delight that the sky is so blue, and the leaves so green, and the sun so golden and warm.

The birds were singing now, for there had just passed a bounteous shower, and the greensward was twinkling with a myriad diamonds, and every leaf and twig was hung with sparkling drops. Rella, swollen by numerous threadlike tributaries, that sprang into being at every shower, was bubbling and whirling with extra vigour, its clear stream clouded by the turbulent freshets, to the huge satisfaction of its multitudinous trout, which were all on the feed. Sheep were bleating, and cows were lowing on the fat, plashy meadows beside the Rella, sheltered by the wooded hills that embosomed them. Alice, after wandering over a number of old airs, at last struck on one belonging to a simple old ballad she had learnt from her mother. Presently she began to sing it in a low sweet voice.

There was a weaver's daughter once  
In Stratford town did dwell,  
And she was so surpassing sweet  
That all folks loved her well.

And though she worked in silks so gay,  
Yet homespun was her wear;  
But satin-clad might envy her  
Because she was so fair.

She wore no shoon upon her feet  
As through the streets she paced;  
And her yellow hair, like golden rings,  
Fell down unto her waist.

The king his son rode through the street  
 Where this fair maiden dwelt ;  
 At sight of her the heart did leap  
 Beneath his jewelled belt.

"Come down, come down, thou lovely maid,  
 Come down and be my bride ;  
 For I have seen no face so fair  
 In all this country-side.

"Oh, if I come down, thou noble youth,  
 Wilt thou by Mary swear  
 That thou wilt not ungentle prove,  
 And leave me to despair?"

In Stratford town, that very day,  
 'The wedding it was seen ;  
 And ne'er was known in any land  
 So good and fair a queen.

The air was one of those plaintive airs, like "Barbara Allen," for instance, which are so satisfying to the sense that when they are finished we do not want to hear anything else. Any other tune would jar on the sensibility they had excited. Alice felt this influence—closed the piano, and walked to the window.

The effect of the most exquisite music is to create a feeling of melancholy. Is it because we hear the music mounting up and dying away so far above us, and know that the longing to rise on its wings is so hopeless a longing? It was to shake off this almost painful depression that Alice, seating herself beside Marian, spoke as she did.

"When will my king's son come riding by, I wonder, Marian?"

Marian looked at her fondly, and smoothed her hair.

"Her yellow hair, like golden rings,  
 Fell down unto her waist.

But you have not taken to walking barefoot yet, Alice."

"Do you think he would come if I did?"

"Because, if so, you would become a pilgrim to Love's shrine? I think your head is getting turned with the romances you read, Alice; and you think of nothing but fairy princes and other fabulous creatures."

"Heigho! What is one to do in this out-of-the-way place, Marian? One never sees any company—at least, no one but farmers and mine agents."

"Fie, Alice dear! Don't you remember what poor mamma



used to say? That this quiet retired Polvrehan of ours was a happier place than the busy bustling world?"

Alice pouted, having no answer to make. She was the spoilt child, and always had been—and for the usual reason, that she was the prettiest.

She was slightly made, with a fair complexion—milk and roses—and her hair was the real golden hair—not yellow and not red, but that indescribable colour that painters love, and poets sigh about. Her eyes were large blue dreamy ones, her mouth well cut, and her head gracefully placed on her shoulders. There was nothing peculiarly characteristic about her face—it was cast in a common mould of prettiness—one sees many such pretty girls—and yet one can never see too many of them.

Marian Carlyon was not pretty in this sense of the word, but she was far from plain, at least hers was not a plain face in the sense of being "ordinary." I don't think it boasted of a single classical feature. Her eyes were perhaps the best part of her face, for they were dark and lustrous. Her mouth in repose would not attract attention, but when she spoke or smiled there was a very sweet expression about it; there was perhaps a suspicion of firmness and determination about it which made it so unattractive in repose. She could boast of no profusion of hair like her sister. Two plain bands, so brown as to be almost black, were drawn back over a forehead too broad perhaps to be in accordance with most people's notions of beauty. The great charm of Marian's face lay in expression. Alice's face pleased by force of mere colour and contour. Two sisters were seldom less alike than these two. Marian, the elder, was like her mother, while Alice, as her father would say proudly, was a true Carlyon.

When the spoilt beauty began to pout, her sister drew her towards her and kissed her. Alice was an affectionate girl, and the little cloud vanished at once.

"I wonder if there is any truth in that story of the weaver's daughter, Marian."

"I should think not."

"Oh! why not? I don't see why he should not have fallen in love with her, though she was poor."

"I don't argue from the possibilities."

"From what, then?"

"Well, I don't remember that Goldsmith makes any mention of such an accident in the history of our kings and queens. Do you?"

"No, I don't—but then it might not have been a king of England."

"I don't see what the son of any other king should have to do riding through Stratford town."

"Well, I don't know—there are so many Stratfords—and this might be one somewhere on the sea coast."

"I'm afraid, Alice, there is no Stratford on the sea coast."

"What a tease you are, Marian. Why don't you let me have my poor queen and noble king? They never harmed you!"

"My child, you have such implicit faith in all that you read in your romances and fairy legends that it is necessary to bring them sometimes to the test of truth, even though it destroys some pretty allusions."

"But don't you think it possible that a king's son could love a poor girl? Why, now I think of it, there is King Cophetua. I suppose he is an historical personage?"

"I'm not so sure of that, Alice."

"But even supposing he is not, don't you think that a real king might love a beggar maid?"

"A real king! Ah, but all real kings are not crowned, Alice. And some real kings go about in beggar's rags."

"Why there, I protest, you have been reading some of my romances on the sly."

"No—not I."

"Well, then, where did you find that 'real king' of yours in shabby clothes?"

"I don't know exactly. Perhaps I have dreamt of him!"

"I wish you would tell me some of your dreams, then, for they must be quite as good as my romances, as you call them."

There was a little pause after this, for Marian did not answer. She was picturing the "real king" to herself, perhaps. I wonder if the portrait disclosed any traits that resembled James Trefusis. There was nothing peculiarly regal about his appearance. He was a broad-shouldered, honest, openfaced Englishman only, and yet I fancy there was a good deal about the ideal king that would have recalled James to us, could we have seen the fancy-picture.

"A penny for your thoughts, Marian," said Alice, after a brief silence.

"I was trying to think of any well-vouched incident like your weaver's daughter: but I can't."

"Oh, can't you? Well, then, I can give you something like it. There was the Lord of Burleigh—'Burleigh House, by Stamford town.' What do you say to the authenticity of

that? He wasn't a king to be sure, and she was not a beggar-maid; but they were in very different ranks in life, and they were married and lived happily."

"I think you've forgotten the end of the story, Alice dear,—

‘But a trouble weighed upon her,  
And perplexed her night and morn,  
With the burthen of a honour  
Unto which she was not born.’—

And did not she at length die, and was she not buried ‘in the dress that she was wed in, that her spirit might have rest?’ I’m afraid, Alice, you’ve quoted a bad case for the romantic side of the argument."

"Then a woman ought not to marry a man who is her superior in rank, you think, Marian?"

"You appeal to me as if I were a judge, you silly child. I only form my opinion as well as I can."

"And that opinion is——"

"That opinion is, Alice, darling, that love cannot exist in inequality."

"But why, Marian?"

"Because I don't think that love and doubt can exist together, and where there is inequality there must be doubt."

"I don't understand you."

"I mean, dear—to take the instance of that dear old ballad of mamma's—that at times the queen must have been haunted with a doubt whether her husband's fair name had not suffered for his stooping to lift her to the throne at his side."

"But what matter if he really loved her? He would know that he stooped for a jewel worthy of the crown, and that his fair name could not fairly suffer."

"And do you think he had no doubts—no suspicions?" asked Marian. She had become interested in this argument, and she rose from her chair and walked up and down under the veranda.

"What doubts and suspicions, dear?" asked Alice, coming to her sister's side. They wound their arms round each other, and began to pace to and fro side by side, passing beyond the veranda and extending their walk along the path which ran in front of the house.

"I fancy him at times suffering terribly as he looked at his beautiful queen, and wondering if all that perfection was really his. He must have asked his heart at times whether it were not possible that what was given him for love was nothing more than gratitude."

"Poor king! I think he is more to be pitied than the queen; don't you, Marian?"

"Women, I believe, suffer more intensely in this way than men."

There was a brief pause again, and the sisters took two or three turns up and down the garden. Marian was thinking of her mother's sufferings, with which she was better acquainted than her younger sister.

"I wonder, Marian," said Alice at last, "why they never reverse the old story."

"How do you mean, child?"

"Why, make the queen marry a weaver, or the princess fall in love with a beggar. I never remember anything of the sort."

"It would not tell well, would it? There is something in the idea that is humiliating to the man whom you want to make your hero."

"Yes; I suppose that must be it. It did not seem quite right, and yet I could not explain it."

"To come down from your beloved land of Romance to plain matter of fact—one doesn't think much harm of a woman who marries a rich man, even if he is a little older than she is—women are so dependent. But how dreadful it is to hear of a man marrying for money!"

"It's very common though, isn't it, Marian?"

"I fear it is. What can a woman think of the man who marries her for such a mercenary reason?"

"The wretch!"

This was all very natural talk for two girls secluded from the world very much; but it was a conversation that had considerable influence on their future. How often do seeming trifles swell into importance in this life? Don't you remember the whole string of awful circumstances in the "Arabian Nights"—all of which arose simply from the throwing away of a date stone, whereby the son of a powerful Jinn lost the use of his eye?

"I remember poor mamma used to say," said Marian, as they took another turn up the path, "that it was quite bad enough when a woman could not love her husband, but that it was a shocking thing indeed when she could not respect him even. Could she respect a man who had married her for money?"

"Oh, dear no—I should think not!"

"No, Alice dear, depend upon it, though a woman is often obliged to owe position to her husband, the reverse is inadmissible. A man if he really loves a woman, can never consent to owe his position to her."

As Marian uttered these words they reached the end of the walk, which led up to a door in the wall, opening into the plantation.

Marian's eyes had been bent on the ground, and she had not noticed that the door was open now, and that James Trefusis was standing there.

James had been away in London for several weeks. Mr. Carlyon had seen the model of his loom, and was so pleased with it that he had advanced him enough money to take him to town, in order that he might submit his design to some practised engineer, and see what he could make of it. What the result of that visit was we shall learn shortly.

Alice was the first to see him.

"What! back so soon, James? I thought we should not see you yet. Papa said you would be gone a long time. You've been terribly missed. My Brigand has been at a complete standstill for want of the blue grounding for the sky and—but how ill you look!"

"London don't suit me, Miss Alice," and he added, almost fiercely, "nor I it! Is the master in, do you know, Miss?"

This last question was addressed to Marian. She only bowed her head. James Trefusis passed on towards the house. The two girls went indoors at once. It seemed as if a sudden gloom had fallen on the day.

Marian felt sure that James had heard what she said. What matter? you ask. I answer—Much! Although she knew nothing of his love, she was conscious to herself of a desire to stand high in his opinion, and she had allowed him to overhear words of hers, which, without any knowledge of the conversation which led to them, he could not but think dictated by pride and exclusiveness. I can hardly explain exactly what she felt and feared. She could see only too clearly that he was pained at what she had said. Perhaps, without knowing his love, she, who admired him almost unconsciously, felt she had closed the door against herself.

There was nothing strange in the admiration of such a girl as Marian, for a man like James Trefusis. Compared with the fuddling squireens and uneducated young farmers, who were the only men she had to compare him with, his character "stuck fiery off indeed." And in her presence he had always this further advantage, that, like all true sons of giants, he was gentle before the woman he loved, and was a child, with all his strength, while she was near.

James Trefusis found Mr. Carlyon sitting in his own sanctum, discussing a bottle of sherry with the doctor. George Carlyon's health was giving way a little now, and the doctor,



an ignorant country practitioner, frequently dropped in to see him, and never refused a glass of wine. Nevertheless, the doctor was not so ignorant that he did not know how Carlyon was injuring himself by this very same habit of drinking with everyone who came to see him. Dr. Johns had practised among the squireens and miners long enough to know the effects of such habits.

A very different man was George Carlyon now from the man who saw little James Trefusis first in old Peter Roskilly's barrow. His eyes were bloodshot, his skin yellow and dull, and he had a tremulous under lip, and a hand that made the bottle tinkle against the glass as he poured out the wine.

But he was as merry, and kindly, and hearty as ever. When James came in he shook him by the hand warmly, told him "to sit down—he hadn't expected him back yet, but he was right glad to see him again. What had he done in London?"

"Nothing," said James shortly, sinking into a chair.

"Nothing! How's that? Didn't Briant help you? or were you idling away your time? Lads will be lads in London."

"Nay! I never idled my time, and no one could be kinder than Mr. Briant. I showed him the model, and he looked at it, and said it was clever, and asked me what looms I'd seen. I told him none. Where had I learnt about them? So I told him out of books, and mentioned the books. And then he shook his head, and said, 'My good fellow, you've been wasting time sadly. Those books are all old and gone by. Your invention is not a new one. It was found out eight years ago by—by—' there I forget the name he told me; but he said 'twas in use everywhere, and I was a day behind the fair."

"By Jove, how provoking!" said George Carlyon, "and what did you do then?"

"Why, I up fist and smashed the model, and came right away here."

"And a good thing too, Trefusis," broke in the doctor, "for, I'm sorry to say, your uncle's very bad, and not likely to last long. I'm glad you're back, for he's been asking for you over and over again."

"Ills don't come singly, it seems," said James, with a bitterness that the others, who were ignorant of the scene in the garden just now, were at a loss to account for.

"You mustn't take this failure so to heart, James," said Carlyon. "You must set to work to invent something that hasn't been done before. Is it about the advance you're troubled? Nay, I'd be ashamed to reckon that, for I ought

to have known enough of my old trade to have saved you that expense. We're quits there, my lad; we're quits there."

"Thank you, Sir, heartily. I'll hope to pay you back though, some day; for if Uncle Peter dies I'll be off to London for good, and try to make sure I'm not going over old ground. I'll keep up with the times then, and maybe do something to be proud of. I'll try, at any rate."

This resolve surprised George Carlyon. Perhaps it surprised James himself almost as much. It was, in truth, formed almost at the moment he spoke it, and never would have been conceived but for that unfortunate passage in the garden a few minutes before. Those words of Marian's had wounded the poor fellow deeply, and as he blundered away with the dart still rankling in his heart, the first instinct was the instinct of the wounded beast, to get out of sight and hearing, and lie down. In the short time he had spent in London, James had learnt there was no solitude like the solitude of a stranger in a great city, and he longed to bury himself in the busy crowds that would not notice his scars or heed his agony.

He went home and shut himself up. His uncle's dangerous state was sufficient excuse for his doing so. And in this manner, for two days he brooded over his bitter disappointment, watching by the sick bed, and tending with that almost womanly care, of which a strong man is capable, the last moments of one who had been a second father to him.

On the third day, when the evening closed in, James drew the sheet up over Peter Roskilly's face, and then he was alone in the cottage. At the end of the week they buried the old man, and on the night of the funeral James took leave of his friends and set out for London.

It was midnight when he set out to walk across the moors to the north road, where he could catch the morning mail. He determined to go up the valley of the Rella—for reasons into which we need hardly inquire.

Standing in the valley under Polvrehan, he saw the moonbeams gleaming on the panes of a little white-curtained window, and he knew that the woman he loved was asleep there.

"Good-night. Good-bye. God guard you!" he murmured as he set out along the banks of the Rella, but ever and anon, as he threaded the windings of the valley, he looked back and saw the moonlight sleeping on the walls of Polvrehan, and again and again he called on Heaven to bless her for whom his life had become dark.

## CHAPTER III.

CARLYON, CORMACK, AND CO.

"My dears, I expect Captain Cormack to dine with us to-day," said Mr. Carlyon, joining his daughters on the lawn in front of Polvrehan.

The girls were a little surprised, for generally their father did not introduce his business acquaintances to them, much less ask them to dine. Mr. Carlyon noticed their wonder, and explained his reasons.

"He is a very agreeable person, exceedingly well-informed, and we are likely to see a great deal of him now, for I meditate taking him as a partner."

"Have we ever seen him, papa?" asked Marian, anxious to learn more of one whose society they were likely to have so much of.

"No, Min, he was introduced to me at the Wheal Tolmar dinner, a week or so ago."

"Is he a mine-captain, papa, or a real captain?" asked Alice. A not unnecessary question, by-the-way, for Cornwall being almost entirely maritime and mining, there is no lack of captains of every description.

"Oho; Miss Alice is looking out for a captain of dragoons, 'with his long sword, saddle, bridle,' eh? What a pity he isn't a real soldier! He has served in the Spanish army, I believe; but I suppose that is not enough."

"In the Spanish army, papa? He is an Englishman," said Marian.

"Yes, he is, my dear. He was connected with some mine in Portugal, but entered the army of Don Carlos. Since his return to England he has been rather a wanderer, he tells me, but I believe he is engaged in some way on a mine down west."

"He is a sort of soldier, then, papa. Is he good-looking?" inquired Alice.

"I declare she is quite ready to fall in love with him already. Oh, you forward puss"—and he pinched her cheek—"He is, I think, rather nice-looking."

"And young?"

"Well, I can't say about that. He might be two and twenty, and he might be forty."

"I'm all curiosity to see him!" said Alice.

"Does he know anything about engines, papa?" enquired Marian.

"Humph! I can hardly say—but he's a sort of universal genius, and a very enterprising and shrewd fellow. You see, I want some one who will take the active management now. James Trefusis was a great help to me, and now he's gone I'm obliged to go to the foundry oftener than I can afford time."

It is not easy to say how George Carlyon's time was so much occupied that he could not attend to his business. The real truth was, he was inventing excuses. Cormack had taken his fancy greatly at the dinner where he met him, and, seeing the impression he created, had not failed to use every effort to establish himself in Mr. Carlyon's favour.

Henry Cormack was a man excellently calculated to get on in the world. His was one of those cold hard natures which inevitably succeed simply because they can hold on their course unswayed by pity or liking.

He was a finely-built man, but rather slim, and he had the white face, the pale reddish hair, the keen grey eye, and aquiline nose which were so many signs of his temperament and disposition. He wore a moustache, on the strength of his Spanish service, and that moustache served to hide a mouth which was coarse and wide and ogreish.

He was excellent company—though he never smiled. He could laugh when it was necessary, crack jokes, rather bitter ones at times—and be a very jolly companion indeed. But a close observer would have seen that the moment the laugh died out his face instantly became sternly stolid—that the jest was spoken with a tone of contempt—and that the jolly companionship was only the clever assumption of a part. He could drink deep, but was never affected by what he took, which indicates, I fancy, that he was not really rollicking, but merely soaking. There was no excitement of the spirits to reinforce the excitement of the stimulant. It is bad enough when a man drinks deep and gets drunk; but it is worse when he drinks deep and does not get drunk. The former injures himself—the latter is dangerous to others.

When Henry Cormack was a young man he had obtained an appointment as clerk to a mine in Portugal. How he got it I do not know, for he was one of those men who do not seem to have fathers and mothers—probably because they cut themselves adrift early from such relations as are likely to become burdens at some future period. For some time he went on capitably, winning golden opinions, but at last suspicion of questionable practices on his part was aroused. There was no exposure, but Cormack withdrew—with a hole in his reputa-

tion, and a lesson which he never forgot—a lesson on the necessity of caution, and a profound respect for the maxim, “Don’t be found out.”

Cast adrift from the mine, he was glad to enter the Carlist ranks, in which he served with credit, for he had nerve and personal courage, which, however—thanks to his calculating coolness—never running him into needless danger, was never overtaxed.

On his return to England, he lived the usual hand-to-mouth shiftless life of a London adventurer; but naturally gravitating towards mines, eventually got employment on a Cornish speculation, got up by Londoners, and having once inserted his foot into the business in this way, soon contrived to make room for his body. At the time when George Carlyon made his acquaintance, he was in full feather, having effected some lucky investments in shares that made him rich and respectable.

Such was the man whom careless George Carlyon was about to trust implicitly with his business. There is one thing to be said for Carlyon—had Cormack been only honest, he possessed every other quality required for the position in which he was to be placed. It was only that one thing that he needed, and of course its absence was not suspected. Still no one perhaps but George Carlyon would have taken a man for so responsible a post, on no more evidence of his honesty than the fact that he was jolly fellow to meet at a mine dinner.

Cormack had heard of George Carlyon often. His character was pretty well known throughout the county. Here, thought the adventurer, was just the pigeon to pluck—just the man to make use of and fleece. To his great delight he found Carlyon not only take a great fancy to him, but ask him over to his house, and propose—after a conversation as to steam engines, adroitly started by Cormack—to take him into partnership. This the wily schemer felt was a safer game than the chances of mining. If he still wished to gamble—and he had the love of gambling latent within him—he might get Carlyon to speculate—or speculate with the money of the firm, and so gamble in safety.

At the appointed hour, and with most businesslike punctuality, Captain Cormack presented himself at Polvrehan. During dinner he made himself exceedingly agreeable, and entirely won Alice’s good opinion. In the evening they had music, and he sang some Spanish ballads with good taste and a fair voice, and he taught Alice to play the Bolero and Cachuca, and when she had learnt to play them, showed her how they were danced.

He did not succeed quite so well in getting into Marian's good graces. Marian was a serious and high-principled girl, and there were many careless things he said which, she felt, were flippant and irreverent, although the others did not notice them.

It was the tone of his mind which displeased her. She told Alice of her objections, and got laughed at for her pains.

"You don't expect a young man—and I'm sure he's young, dear—to be as solemn as a parson. You'll have to marry a bishop I'm sure, Marian, or you'll never find any one pious enough for you."

"I don't like people to be cynical and irreverent, Alice, but I don't want everyone to be serious as a bishop. There are bounds, however, and once or twice Captain Cormack expressed sentiments I do not approve of, and spoke slightly of feelings and things which should be treated with respect."

"Doesn't he sing nicely, though?"

"With great taste, and a thorough knowledge of music. But do you think that will cover a multitude of sins, like charity?"

"There, now, don't go back to his faults again, Marian, or I shall be obliged to confess that sometimes I didn't like what he said. So kiss me for that confession, and good-night!"

The next day Captain Cormack was over again, and the next, and the next. Each time he paid a visit of respect to the young ladies, and then retired with papa, and was closeted with him for the rest of the day. The discussion of the terms of partnership, and a host of details connected with it, were ample excuse for these long consultations. But there was surely no necessity for the quantity of sherry drunk by these two confabulators!

Captain Cormack came away from these interviews as cool, collected, and steady as possible, but George Carlyon was generally so—"tired" he called it, that he lay on the sofa in his sanctum all the evening, and slept, breathing stentorously. He didn't get down to breakfast, either, any of these mornings.

At last the terms were agreed upon and the sum named. Cormack paid part in money and part in shares in a mine called Wheal Tolvading, situated in a western part of the country. At first George Carlyon seemed disinclined to take the shares.

"I never dabbled in mines yet, and I don't want to burn my fingers," he said.

"My dear Sir, if you have not speculated in mines it is high time you began to do so. As a Cornishman, you will get every advantage, for I've observed that, though the miners will rob Londoners without scruple, they are tolerably honest to a brother Cornishman. There are fortunes and fortunes to be made at this game."

"And lost!" said Carlyon.

"Yes; but only by persons who have no experience or advice to go by."

"Well, I have no experience!"

"But, my dear Sir, I have, and you can have my advice. This partnership of ours will swallow up my small capital for a while, or I should continue to speculate. But you shall have all the advantage of my experience and skill. You shall double your money in no time. And it's no bother at all!"

"I don't like beginning."

"Begin with these shares I offer. They are worth the price I place them at, at this very moment. You can turn them into cash on the spot, almost. But in a week's time they will be worth double. Take my word for it, they will be worth double, Mr. Carlyon."

"Well! I'll become speculator in my old age, and take the hares."

"You shall have the very best and soundest advice as to their disposal."

George Carlyon accordingly kept the shares, and as Cormack predicted, in a week's time they had risen to double the value at which they had been estimated. The next week they rose a little more. "Now," said Cormack, "sell every one of them!" George Carlyon was not quite prepared to do so, but eventually acted on the advice, and had the satisfaction, in a few days, of seeing "Wheal Tolvadings" quoted at a figure much below what he had taken them from Cormack at.

The latter did not fail to call his attention to the fact, and also to the very large profit he had made by the transaction. Carlyon acknowledged that he owed his good fortune to Cormack, and determined in future to be entirely guided by his advice.

With great caution the schemer led his victim on. Speculation after speculation in the share market was adventured, and it seemed as if good fortune was fated to follow his indication.

Cormack pointed out an investment to Carlyon. In a few days it became the rage. He recommended him to sell out.

It was as quickly down in the market. Some of this was luck ; much was the result of information which Cormack purchased—at a heavy price it is true, but cheaply, considering what he got by it.

For to the old craving for excitement by drink George Carlyon was adding the craving for excitement by gambling. Presently he was not content to limit his speculations to the investments Cormack pointed out. He began to speculate quietly on his own judgment, and as a rule he lost. But he could afford to do so, for the money he was making under Cormack's auspices was more than enough to pay. Cormack, in the meantime, was perfectly well-informed of all these private ventures, but he pretended to know nothing. He spent his time chiefly in learning the management of the foundry. He prevailed on Carlyon to exert himself for a few days, and put him into the best way of superintending and seeing that all was done well and expeditiously.

In a short time he had become virtually the proprietor. George Carlyon, busied with his new and exciting pursuit, never went near the works. By-and-by Cormack, as his partner began to speculate more widely and wildly, found means to get the business still more into his own hands.

What Carlyon wanted was ready money for his speculations. Cormack let him use the profits of the firm, taking as security—merely for form's sake, he explained to the other—a further quarter share in the business in exchange for the loan. By degrees he allowed the gambler to run alone, and play his own game. The result was still heavier losses, and the demand for more money. Bit by bit he obtained a lien on the whole foundry, and even on the estate of Polvrehan, including the house. Then, like a wise man, he purchased, very quietly, the mortgages which already existed on the property. In short, he held the whole in his own hand.

This, however, all took time, and on several occasions, when some lucky stroke rehabilitated Carlyon for a while, the poor gambler would be seized with remorse, and clear off some of the encumbrances, only to plunge once again into speculation and involve himself afresh.

Cormack had more than once been asked by Carlyon to accept of the moorland, to which I referred in the first chapter, as security ; but he always contrived to decline it, without apparently doing so on account of its being really of no value. The day came, however, when he offered to buy it.

Captain Cormack was a bit of a sportsman. He could throw a fly, as Rella's trout could bear witness ; and he could kill a snipe on the wing, as the moors above Merrimeet could testify.



Of course he had free right of shooting and fishing all over the estate, and he exercised it.

He was strolling gun in hand, on the moors close by one of the backbones of granite rocks—upheaved by some mighty convulsion of earth how many centuries ago!—when he encountered a poor fellow known in the village as “Mazed Martin”—a half-witted creature who lived on charity. By the merest chance in the world Cormack, in a moment of good nature, had flung the unhappy wretch half-a-crown, and so secured his eternal gratitude. The village story was that “Mazed Martin” had been a wealthy tradesman in Truro, but had lost his all in mining. He spent the chief part of his time in wandering over the moors, “prospecting” for ore.

When he met Cormack he was trying the divining rod—a superstitious implement which is still believed in in the west country, and forms, no doubt, a capital tool for cunning to employ against credulity.

In language barely half intelligible for the gibberish he interspersed with it, Mazed Martin began to assure the captain that he had discovered a lode, and begged him to keep the secret. The Captain was to advance the money to begin working, and he and Martin were to share the profits.

Cormack only laughed at the poor creature. He could use the divining rod himself, and knew the trick. But while he was laughing a sudden thought occurred to him. These moors had not been tried for ore. They might be rich in metal. The general character of the place resembled that of one of the richest mining districts in the county. He began to examine the rocks more closely, and before long discovered certain indications which, to his practised eye, denoted that there was ore in the neighbourhood, although it was, of course, quite a matter of uncertainty as to whether it was present in sufficient quantities to make mining a profitable undertaking. He devoted the next two or three days to a close and careful survey—of course, carrying his gun to make pretence of shooting. When he returned to Polvrehan without even a single snipe, you may be sure he was bantered by Alice. But he had found something more valuable than snipes on the moor! He had established the fact that the district, if not a really rich mineral district, showed indications in sufficient plenty to induce speculative miners to try it, if it were once brought under their notice.

“I must get hold of these moors, somehow,” he said to himself, as he turned towards Polvrehan. “Why didn’t I think of this before, when he wanted to raise money on them? It doesn’t matter, though; he’s pretty certain to try it again, for

the beggar must be in want of ready cash before long. I wonder what he lost in Carnseuth Consols? A pretty penny, I'll lay. And then Wheal Matilda and South Polmeddan, and Menabay must have let him in for something heavy. Is it not odd? When I started him in this line, I showed him exactly how to do things profitably—when to buy and when to sell—yet he makes these confounded blunders. Never mind! There must be fools in the world, or how are we honest men to live? And I hope he'll be fool enough to sell me the moors, and then I'll see if I can't find more fools to work the mines there, and pay me a pretty penny for leave and royalty. Providence is very kind to put so many fools in the world to support clever fellows. It's exactly like what that old whaling captain, Johnson, of Newcastle, used to tell me about the Northern seas being all filled with little creatures the sailors call 'whale's food.' Master whale has only to open his jaws, and his dinner runs into his mouth. Upon my word, Providence is a wonderful thing after all!"

So musing—in quite a reverential mood you will perceive—Henry Cormack strolled into Polvrehan, in the cool of the evening, and joined the two girls on the lawn, Mr. Carlyon being in his study still, taking his after-dinner nap.

Henry Cormack had made no progress in Marian's good graces by this time, nor was Alice better pleased with him than at first—perhaps hardly as much.

## CHAPTER IV.

## TROUBLE AND AN ANODYNE.

FEW of the people who knew George Carlyon were aware of his difficulties. He had never had the character of being a speculator in mines, and the extent to which he had indulged his lately-acquired taste for that sort of gambling was not suspected. It was known that he had held shares in several very unlucky ventures, but it was supposed that he had been induced, from business motives, to encourage the new adventures, and it was argued that money lost in this way was merely a necessary outlay for the benefit of the foundry.

Everyone said, "Oh, Carlyon can afford to throw away a good deal of money—look what a fortune he is making at the Works!"

It was quite true that the firm of Carlyon, Cormack, and Co. had been doing a roaring trade, and that enormous profits were flowing in. But people did not know that those profits had been anticipated by the senior partner, and, in reality, belonged to the junior in consideration of former advances.

In the meantime the position which Cormack had at first maintained towards Carlyon was greatly altered. The junior partner began to assert himself, and resolutely put a check upon Carlyon's inroads on their common property. It would have been a kind action in anyone else. In the man who had first awaked the gambling spirit, it was merely selfishness.

George Carlyon fretted and fumed, but did not dare to quarrel with Cormack, so he sought refuge from his disappointment in drinking. Alas! what a wreck he had become now—mentally as well as physically! He no longer exercised the most common prudence in his speculations, but rushed headlong into those which his former experience should have told him were not trustworthy.

Cormack, on the other hand, as soon as he entered into partnership with him, had abandoned mining altogether. He never bought a share now, feeling that his present investment was a far safer one; he did not care to speculate when he was removed from the close connection and relationship he had formerly held with the men who knew the real value and workings of the share market.

At last there came a time when Carlyon was reduced to the verge of bankruptcy. The nearness of the danger, suddenly revealed to him by the collapse of some bubble scheme in which he had embarked a great deal of money, sobered and steadied him for a time.

What was he to do? He could not ask Cormack to allow him to appropriate the profits of the business any longer; they were already doubly pledged to the junior partner. He could raise no more money on Polvrehan; it was mortgaged beyond its value now.

There was but one chance left. He strode to the window of the room, whence he could see the moorland stretching away northward, and, shaking his clenched fist at, cursed it for its barrenness. But it was the only thing he had to part with now, and he determined to try yet once again to prevail on Cormack to lend him money on those unprofitable acres.

When next the captain came over he was summoned into Mr. Carlyon's *sanctum*, and there, with tears in his eyes almost, the broken gambler entreated the young man to grant him this favour.

"Lend you money on gorse and granite, Carlyon? You can hardly expect it, surely. You remember that you have for some years past been draining the business of its very life-blood. Where am I to get the money to begin with?"

"Oh, you have enough. I know you have. You are rich—rich! You are coining money over yonder—you must be. Come, only a trifle—a few hundreds. If you don't I'm a ruined man."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Carlyon—I'll buy the cursed unprofitable waste from you."

Carlyon paused.

"I don't like to part with the Polvrehan property, altogether, Cormack——"

"Oh, I don't want it. I should think you ought to know me better than to suppose I'm such an ass as to wish to waste my money on that barren moor. It was only suggested for your convenience. Say no more about it."

"But I want the money."

"But I *don't* want the land; and you don't like to sell it if I did."

"I don't like; but then one must do things one doesn't like sometimes, Cormack!"

"Pray don't do violence to your feelings. I'd much rather not have the moor. I was going to do one of those things one

doesn't like, in buying it to oblige you. Of course the obvious plan is for neither of us to hurt our feelings, and let there be an end of the matter."

"Don't be so hurried with me, Cormack, there's a good fellow. You're such a deuce of a man of business. Give me time—give me time."

"I'll give you as much time as you like. Time is money; but I suppose any amount of it will not make up the loan you require."

"No; I wish it could, Cormack; but don't joke about it—there's a good fellow—because, upon my soul, it is a serious matter. If I can't get this money I'm a bankrupt—a ruined, broken-down bankrupt!"

"I'm very sorry, indeed! But how can I help you?"

"By lending me the money on those acres yonder. You might just as well lend it as pay it."

Cormack was not quite prepared for this thrust. Of late he had found his partner so intellectually enfeebled that he had spoken unguardedly. But he was not a man to be caught tripping.

"Well, if you must have my reasons—the money I should pay you for the land is money I have laid aside for the purchase of some ground near the works, on which to build cottages for the men, and so bring them close to their work and under my own supervision and power. The moor is further off than I should choose, if I were to select, but if I could oblige you by doing so, I would take it, and make it do."

"A capital idea! But you can build on the moor just the same, and make it a speculation of the firm."

"No, Mr. Carlyon. A joint speculation on ground belonging solely to you would be open to serious trouble and complication. I prefer to carry out the idea myself, for I am crochety in the matter of building cottages for such purposes, and you might not enter into my views."

"Well, I suppose you must have it."

"No; there's no must in the case at all. Lee's farm is much handier for my purpose, and I believe he is willing to sell."

"Oh! I didn't mean that the 'must' was yours so much as mine. I *must* have money. Do you object to one thing?"

"What is it?"

"Do you mind keeping the purchase a secret? I don't want people to know I'm parting with the family property. When I'm dead and gone—and that will be soon—it won't matter."

"I have no objection to that. And now what will you sell for?"

The bargain was settled that evening, and the acres of moorland became the property of Henry Cornack, who gave what was really a fair price for them, as far as appearance went, but which was very far below the value of them if, as he conjectured, they abounded in mineral wealth. He congratulated himself on his purchase.

What avail were the few poor hundreds to George Carlyon? If he could only make a lucky stroke with them, he thought. He exercised the greatest prudence and judgment in investing them, and for once his ventures were successful. He doubled his capital in a very short time, and then risked it all once more.

If that were fortunate, he made a solemn vow never to gamble in mines again.

Poor Carlyon, what were his vows worth?

Marian and Alice were of course kept in ignorance of their father's doings. They had seen that of late he had been very much depressed, and remarked with delight that he at last appeared to recover his spirits and become himself once more.

Marian was shrewd and observant, and she had noticed a change in her father—a feverish restlessness, and occasional fits of despondency—ever since his acquaintance with Cormack, and she did not hesitate to attribute them to the captain, though she did not know in what way he was connected with them.

Alice was less keen-sighted than her sister, but she had by degrees come to look on Cormack with something little short of aversion. But she was a good-tempered little thing, and not having any reason for her dislike, was angry with herself for feeling it, and took great pains to conceal it from the captain; who, on his side, flattered himself that he had made a considerable impression on her.

He was a vain man, and vain of a success which he thought always attended him in his dealings with women. He was easily attracted by a pretty face, but there were no depths in his nature to be stirred by real love. Only transient passions, earthy and unrefined by nobility of soul, swayed him. He looked upon woman as an object to chase for amusement, to make love to for pleasure, and to fling away for weariness. At his first arrival at Polvrehan he had half determined to woo—and when he said "woo," he meant "win"—Alice for his wife. But when the first transient impression her pretty face and sweet disposition produced on

him passed away, he began to see that such a step would be an error. He would encumber himself with a wife—a possession which, with his opinion of women and virtue, was only a source of anxiety and trouble—without obtaining any compensating consideration; for she was the younger child, and the property would naturally go for the most part to Marian. And the idea of chaining himself for life to that plain, sensible, quiet, good little woman was an act of suicide which he never contemplated for a moment.

Nevertheless, although he entirely abandoned the idea of seriously seeking Alice in marriage, he did not think it bad sport to pay her attention, and beguile the time in flirting with her. There was no female society in the neighbourhood, and though he despised women, he liked women's society. One afternoon, as he was sitting with the girls and trying over a Spanish ballad he had written out the notes of for Alice, he was summoned to Mr. Carlyon's study. He found poor George Carlyon in a terrible state of agitation.

"What's wrong now, Carlyon?"

"Oh, everything—everything, my dear fellow. Upon my soul, I don't know what to do. And I am very ill too, and can't collect my thoughts—and by Jove I'm going mad with it."

"Come, come, be calm."

"Confound you, and your 'be calms;' and your stony face. There, there; I beg pardon, but I am half out of my senses."

"What has gone wrong?"

"Here, sit down and have a glass of wine. Won't you? What, not to keep me company?"

Cormack shook his head.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" broke out Carlyon again; "I'm a ruined man. I haven't a penny in the world."

"What! been speculating unluckily again?"

"Worse than ever—worse than ever a thousand times over."

He began to walk up and down the room wildly, but watching Cormack out of the corner of his eye—for he had a favour to ask of him.

"What *am* I to do for money?" he asked at last.

Cormack did not answer. He sat with his elbows on his knees and his face bent down, so as to be in the shade.

"What *am* I to do for money?" repeated Carlyon.

Still no answer.

This was too much for George Carlyon's patience.

"Do you hear me say, Cormack, that I haven't a penny in the world?"

Cormack nodded.

"And you don't offer to help me!"

"What can I do?"

"Advance me some money on my share in the business."

"But, my dear Carlyon, you seem to forget that I have let you have money of the firm's already to a greater amount than your share is worth in the market."

"But surely you are not going to serve me in this way when I'm in such difficulties? This is an act of friendship, not a business speculation."

"The best sort of friendship, in my opinion, Carlyon, is a strict and honest business dealing. I can't let you have any money. I have none, in fact."

This last was added to soften the refusal.

"Have none! Come, I know better than that, you hard-fisted, cool-headed beggar."

"I repeat I have none to lend you!"

"And yet I tell you that without this help I am utterly ruined."

"I regret it. But I can do nothing more."

Upon this poor George Carlyon burst into a fit of half-drunken rage, passed from that into a state of maudlin grief, and finally leaning his head on the table sobbed pitifully like a weary child. Cormack tried to prevail on him to conquer his weakness, but the attempt only roused him to another paroxysm of fury. In these alternate fits of rage and misery, he at length worked himself into a state most pitiable to see. Even Cormack was touched by it. At least we must suppose so, for he took from his pocket a phial of dark-brown fluid.

"Look here, Carlyon, you've been over-doing it a little. Take some of this, it will soothe you and send you to sleep."

"Opium!"

"Yes; I learned its value when I was laid up with ague in Spain. I always carry a little stock. You lie down quietly for a bit and take a dose. Be careful though! Don't take more than one of the doses marked on the bottle. Two of them would kill you. And to-morrow we'll talk matters over."

"You'll lend me the money, won't you?" asked Carlyon, wheedlingly, as he took the bottle.

"No! It is impossible. We must see how you can extricate yourself with the least exposure."

Poor Carlyon knew what that meant, and his heart sank within him.



"Mind what you do with that bottle now, Carlyon. Two of those doses would kill you, remember. Be careful, there's a good fellow. Remember, two of them would be fatal. Good-night."

And with that Captain Cormack returned to the parlour, and, sitting down at the piano, sang the Spanish ballad for Alice, and played much exquisite music.

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## CHAPTER V

### ON THE BORDERS OF BOHEMIA.

WHEN James Trefusis came to London he was very nearly becoming a castaway. A broad black stream of shiftless, careless, aimless, hopeless vagabondism crawls through that city towards the ocean of Oblivion, like another Thames seeking the sea; and into it this poor fellow was almost on the point of plunging.

It seemed to him, when he quitted the western valley, that he left his life there, and was a living corpse only. He had nothing to look forward to, and he longed for rest, or, at all events, forgetfulness; and watching those who were drifting down the dark current, he envied them, and longed to follow their example.

He spent his days gloomily, and at night plunged into the gaiety of reckless company, carousing on the banks of the stream to which he was approaching nearer and nearer every hour.

The black river I speak of touches at one point the borderland of the pleasant plains of Bohemia. Inhabitants of that country only too often wander down to its shores, launch their crazy craft, cut the moorings, go adrift, and are lost.

James Trefusis had by some impulse, some instinctive tendency, found his way to the borders of Bohemia soon after his arrival in town. He was speedily a naturalised citizen, and adopted the habits of the land. The particular province in which he settled—for Bohemia is a large state, and much subdivided—was inhabited chiefly by dreamers—men of science, who had not time to develop properly the splendid theories they had conceived—inventors, who lacked the capital to commence a work that was to turn mud into gold—authors,

who had not wherewithal to buy pens and ink to begin the books which were to regenerate mankind.

In this out-lying district—as elsewhere in the vast kingdom of Bohemia—there was a large consumption of tobacco, with a considerable flow of spirits (animal and alcoholic), and an unlimited supply of beer.

Besides these, there existed much warm friendship, loyal fellowship, and a close brotherhood. Nowhere out of Bohemia could you find as sterling metal, I fancy. With all their differences and squabbles, the inhabitants were true to each other and their national cause. The people of this unsophisticated land did not stab one another in the back. They had practically a common purse, and consequently no jealousy about getting work for each other; and they kept a perpetual love-feast of content and bread and cheese.

James Trefusis was able to get engineering work, for he had letters of recommendation sufficiently strong to ensure that; but he did not care to labour now that he had lost the object for which he had toiled so willingly for the last years of his life. So he contented himself with periodical fits of energy, by which he got a little stock of money, and then he went back to his Bohemian haunts, and lived on it. He was foolish enough to think that he could find a refuge from memory in the glass, and for a time threatened to take after the model of his old patron.

He had several special cronies in Bohemia, who frequented a quiet tavern in a by-street near Long Acre.

There was the crazy painter, Charlie Crawhall, who made such charming water-colour drawings, when his hand was steady enough, but who was letting his genius waste while he talked about a delusion of his that I am afraid my reader will be tempted to smile at, as James did when he first found out what it was. Crawhall had asked James to come home with him one day to his chambers—an attic in a queer out-of-the-way inn, near Holborn. It was the home of genius, nevertheless. Out of the faded sprawling wall-paper, Charlie had in idly-industrious moments created, with a few touches of the pencil, all sorts of quaint figures. Here, a half-effaced convolvulus was fashioned into a ballet sylph; there, a geranium blossom was turned into a strange bird: in another place, a green leaf was converted into an animal or a fish. It was a perfect gallery of odd conceits. Scraps of paper, covered with unfinished sketches, for which dealers were dunning Charlie, lay about the floor. A few relics from his studio—long since abandoned—littered the room. A battered morion was appropriated to the uses of a tobacco jar; a plaster head of Apollo

was adorned with a red fez ; and an ancient sword did duty for a poker. A dozen long clays, blackened by much use, were placed in an old Venetian goblet ; and odds and ends of fine China were devoted to all sorts of unworthy purposes—to hold lucifers, cigar-lights, cigarette papers, and bills that were never to be paid.

Under the window stood an instrument not unlike a piano. James asked Charlie if he could play.

"Yes. Sit down and watch," was the answer ; and James did sit down, and Charlie, placing himself in front of the instrument, opened it, and touched the keys.

No sound came from them ; but at the back, as the artist's fingers wandered over the notes, rose discs of coloured glass—sometimes singly, sometimes together, or gradually passing in front of one another.

"Why, what on earth is that, Charlie ?"

"Hush! Don't interrupt. Look! there's a lovely harmony ; and then you see it dies away in a warm gray, just touched with the purple."

"What is the meaning of this ?"

"He asks what the meaning is! Bless the man, have you no eye for music? This is my great invention, Jim, and I mean to make my fortune with it—only I can't find the right man to undertake to bring it out properly."

"Bring what out ?"

"Why, this musical instrument. Don't you feel the music? Look here!" He turned to the notes again, and began to touch them.

The sun was pouring in through the window ; and as the transparent discs rose and sank in the frame above the piano, they glowed with indescribable warmth and beauty. Now some pure tint would be shown—tender purple, or rich amber—and then some other hue would mingle with it, giving place to yet another ; the colours now full and splendid—now sombre and grand—now soft and delicate.

"Now watch," said Charlie, growing excited as he bent over the instrument, and, at a touch of the noiseless keys, summoned up fresh combinations. "Now watch. See if you can find out the tune. But no! You're not used to it yet. You must cultivate your eye. I'll explain it to you. It's a piece I call 'Spring.' You see it opens with a subdued blue ; with a little tremulous gray—that's a difficult note, that gray—and then comes a little twinkle of soft yellow sunlight, followed by exquisitely tender greens—and then for the flowers, violets, and may, and buttercups. Look! is not that delicious? There are harmonies, old fellow! And then more

sunlight; and now the rosy hues, for coming summer, and on to a subdued sombre purple for the close of day, with a delicate twinkling of silver light for the stars. There's a piece for you! You couldn't express one-half of that in music: this is the real sort of harmony. How do your eyes feel?"

"A little dazzled with looking at the sunlight."

"Ah, you've an uncultivated eye as yet. To me the harmony of colours is the most exquisite delight. Whenever I am stuck up in a picture I come here and play it, and you can't think what stunning thoughts I get."

"This is a queer thought, at any rate!"

"Not a bit of it. It is only appreciating music by another sense. The vibrations of colour and the vibration of sound are exactly the same, it's my belief, Jim. Why, I often see the colours of the different notes when people play; and I'm sure that music and colour are the same thing, only we call it by different names, according to the manner in which we are conscious of it. The feeling produced by a well-harmonised picture is identical with that produced by a well-harmonised piece of music. All painters are, in fact, musicians."

"Well, it's very odd; but I have noticed that most artists have some skill in music. It's very curious."

"No, it isn't, a bit. But I suppose you're like the rest of them. I've spent half my life in making that instrument, more than half my money in taking it about to different people—music-sellers and all sorts of people—trying to get them to do the thing on a large scale. But it's all no use—the fools don't see it. I suppose, when I'm dead and buried, somebody will crib the notion, and make his fortune. There; light a pipe, Jim; and there's the whisky in that flask under the blunderbuss. I keep it there because the laundress daren't touch it while the firearm mounts guard over it."

Another of James Trefusis's cronies was Dr. Long; nobody quite knew where he had obtained the degree, but he was certainly a very clever fellow. His vision was the supposed discovery of an instrument which was to supersede the operation of trephining, and cure fracture of the skull in some very simple and speedy manner. A third crony was Harry Ryder, who used to spout passages from his great epic, "Cromwell"—a poem of many thousand lines, which had never been written down, and of which the metre was an extraordinary novelty. A fourth was a German, Groeller, a musician, who was always about to finish his opera, which was to surpass Don Giovanni and Der Freischutz. A fifth was a Dane, Kiste, who had travelled extensively, and had penetrated into the

interior of Australia, crossed Central Africa, and wintered in the vicinity of the North Pole.

There were others who frequented the little tavern, but who were not such special cronies of James's. There were notably the two Latrowes, a pair of brothers, who passed themselves off as Bohemians, in order to plunder the aborigines more conveniently. But as the Bohemians, having little to lose, were a little sensitive in the matter of being robbed, the Latrowes had adopted a very cunning plan whereby the family partnership thrived. Mark Latrowe used to be always warning people against his brother Jack, recommending them not to have anything to do with him. Jack was always starting some speculation or other which was to bring affluence to Bohemia, and Mark would join him, and the Bohemians, finding that he who had warned them against any dealings with Jack was willing to join, thought the plan must be an honest one. It always ended in Jack's robbing everybody, his own brother included. Whereupon Mark would make complaint, and the others, seeing that Jack had not spared his own kin, gave the matter up as a bad job, and put up with their loss, and then Jack and Mark divided profits. The schemes were various;—sometimes it was a new literary organ, sometimes a scientific paper, sometimes a picture gallery, sometimes the carrying out of a new invention belonging to a Bohemian, and not wanting any very large capital for its promotion.

I have here hastily sketched these few characters to realise to you in some degree the position in which James Trefusis was placed. It was a trying one for a young man who had just lost his hold of the future, whose past had been a dream and whose present was a dull dead gloom, without a glimmer of hope.

In a society which never took heed for the morrow, which indulged its tastes and avoided all labour, except when driven to it by want, James Trefusis was drawing nearer and nearer to the brink of the black river.

A couple of years of this life told upon him. His mind stagnated, and his spirit became enfeebled by inaction. By sudden outbursts of energy he contrived to earn plenty of money, and was, in fact, one of the wealthiest men in this portion of the Bohemian frontier—perhaps because also he declined to have any dealings with the Latrowes, who accordingly abused and libelled him whenever they had a chance.

His health began to suffer, too, not so much from any excesses—though I fear at this time he kept later hours and drank and smoked more than was good for him—as from want of exercise and wholesome air.

"Jim, you're looking ill. You'd better get Long to give you a set-up," said Charlie Crawlhall one evening.

"Let him trephine you," said Ryder.

"Well, youngster, what's wrong?" said the doctor, leading James to the window. "Egad, you want change—no, not small change, Ryder; I knew you'd say so. You must get away for a bit, Jim, and keep quiet. Can you row?"

"Oh, yes; I'm a very good oar."

"That's right—it's a cheaper and better exercise than riding, I think. Well, you must go off somewhere along the river for a bit, and take lots of exercise."

"Go to Thames Ditton, Jim," said Charlie.

"Or Hampton," said Kiste.

"Better go down to Gravesend—somewhere seaward"—said Ryder.

"You're right, poet," said Long. "Either there or Greenwich—or better still, Blackwall. Lodgings are cheap, and the park jolly."

"But I don't feel ill, and I don't want to be exiled."

"Come, none of your nonsense," said Long, "you must go, or you'll be laid up with a liver or a bilious fever, or something of that sort. You will, upon my word."

"Oh, if he won't go, we'll cut him," said Charlie.

It ended in James determining to take a week or so out of town. He pitched on Greenwich, and he and Charlie Crawlhall went down and spent a jolly day, pretending to look for lodgings. Finally they pitched upon a place near Woolwich, where James got a room at a small cottage not far from the river, on very reasonable terms.

At first he was very lonely in his new abode, and began to brood over his old grief, so that his trip from town was likely to do him little good. But it happened one day as he was returning from a row on the river that he struck up acquaintance by some simple act of common civility with an old gentleman lodging at a cottage not far from his modest abode.

This old gentleman was a retired artillery officer, who on leaving the army settled down in the place where he was cut adrift. He was a clever old fellow, and had loved his trade, so that now, when he had nothing else to occupy his time, he employed himself in studying the science of gunnery, and had been experimenting on the construction of cannon.

In this pursuit James and he met on ground interesting to both. They worked away together; planning new modes of rifling, and new shapes for shot and shell. To have seen them engaged in discharging their model cannon, you would have been inclined to agree with Harry Ryder, who, coming down

one fine afternoon to see how James was, found him, as he afterwards described it, "playing 'Corporal Trim' to some old boy's 'Uncle Toby,' and with practicable cannon."

But in spite of all their efforts they did not hit upon any successful improvement, though, as is often the case, they blundered upon one or two rather curious discoveries.

When James's time for returning to London came—which was when the lowness of his purse warned him—as plainly as the old Border dish of a pair of spurs spoke of "boot and saddle"—that he must turn to and earn some more money—he left his lodgings with great reluctance, and the old gentleman was wretched at the prospect of losing him.

However, James promised to run down and see his friend and fellow-labourer every Sunday—and kept his promise. The old officer's neighbours used to be rather horrified at the pair, for they used to blaze away with their batteries in a way that made the pious jump as they dozed over their devout reading of an evening.

"We shall make our fortunes yet, Trefusis," the Captain used to say. "We are such a happy combination of qualities. You see, thanks to my experience in the Second Brigade, I know what is wanted to be done, and you know how to do it. If we could only perfect that rifle and conical ball scheme!"

"Well, when we do, and you're made a General of Artillery, Captain, you must pop me into a snug berth as Inspector of Gun Factories, or something of that sort."

"Why, my dear Trefusis, you must be dreaming! I was not thinking of our making a fortune in that way. We may do so by selling the article, but as for getting it appreciated by Government, you don't know what an impossibility that is. When I am dead, and you are an old grey-headed man, they may see the merits of our invention, and then they'll crib all the best points, and hardly say 'thank you' for 'em."

"That's not a cheerful prospect."

"It's the right one," said the Captain; and I'm inclined to think the Captain was right.

But this conversation, after all, was reckoning on unhatched chicks. James and the Captain had to invent their gun yet. When they had done that, it would be time enough to consider the difficulty of drawing the attention of the Government officials to it.

Up to this time, at all events, they had made no important step towards the desired invention. Still they worked on patiently.

This employment did James good in every way. He spent a good deal of his time with the old officer, and very little in

Bohemia. What is more, he began to outgrow the bitter poignancy of his disappointment, and the difficulties which surrounded the task he was desirous of achieving stimulated him to persevere. He was one of those men who are encouraged by opposition. The more stubborn the secret, the more energetic were his efforts to master it.

So James Trefusis was led away by the grey-headed, simple soldier, with his toy cannons—away from the Bohemian border, towards which, however, he still cast at times a regretful glance, and to which he sometimes returned for a brief visit. But he was an emigrant from that land of lotus-eating and beer-drinking and pipe-smoking now, and so, I am glad to think, was in less risk of sinking into that black river, which, sweeping by the lower shores of Bohemia, carries off, alas! so many stragglers to the ocean of Oblivion.

It is only fair to James to say that he did not pass out of the region to settle down in the land of real life without many regrets. Charlie Crawhall and his colour-harmonicon, Dr. Long and his surgical instrument, Harry Ryder and his epic, Groeller and his violin, and Kiste with his views on the negro question, were all fondly remembered long after, when James Trefusis was an entire exile from the wild land, and Bohemia knew him no more.

Pleasant, dear, kindly old Bohemia, does not every man who leaves you regret you, and do not all your sons think kindly of one another, and cling together and battle side by side? It must be a grand country which produces such sons, and a rare climate which so fosters the virtues of friendship and fidelity. As Harry Ryder used to sing:—

“Here’s the glass of Bohemia! Brim full you may pour it—

The lips that will touch it are honest and brave;

They are only good wishes, by true hearts breathed o’er it

In fellowship loyal, that trouble the wave.

Then a fig for the prudish, the cold, the abstemious!

Whatever the liquor—come fill, fill it up;

For me there’s no glass like this glass of Bohemia’s,

It suffers no poison to lurk in the cup.”



## CHAPTER VI.

MR. ORR, M.P., AND FAMILY.

MR. ORR, M.P. for Brybemhall, was one of the wealthiest bankers in wealthy Lombard Street. He had the reputation at least of being preposterously rich. His money must have been a positive burden to him, in spite of his having contested and won the borough of Brybemhall. Brybemhall is a pleasant little town, with two evenly-balanced political parties in it, and a large body of shifting and uncertain voters, locally known as the "bloaters and floaters," who sometimes voted on one side and sometimes on the other for reasons which I know no more about than the Man in the Moon—indeed, very much less about them than that mysterious lunatic. For whenever a new writ was issued for Brybemhall, the Man in the Moon came down—not too soon, but in very good time—and asked certain questions—not about the way to Norwich—and made certain arrangements mutually agreeable to candidate and constituents. It was he who "squared" the borough for Mr. Orr, who entered the House as a regular true-blue supporter of Church and Crown.

Mr. Orr was a Conservative, most probably because it was so eminently respectable, implying that he had had ancestors and inherited traditions to cling to. Now, in sober truth, his ancestors were mere fortunate nobodies who made money in mysterious ways during the French war. It may appear odd, but it is nevertheless true, that their obscurity did not prevent his discovering their portraits in the possession of an enterprising dealer, resident in Soho, who must clearly have bought them—when the Orr estates (in Ayr, we will say) went to the hammer—with a prophetic eye to the future fortunes of the race.

In reality, Mr. Orr had no political opinions. He could not give you his sentiments on any Parliamentary question until he had read his paper of a morning. He got out of bed a bifurcated receptacle for other people's opinions. He rose from his breakfast table a full-fledged senator. Considering this, his choice of a party was eminently creditable to him.

Had he selected the other side he might have made his principles profitable, instead of their being expensive luxuries. Perhaps, after all, this choice of party to a man of his

plethoric riches was a wholesome species of gold-letting. He even went so far as to be part proprietor of a true blue daily paper, which was a dead loss every day. And as for those subscriptions towards the secret service fund for which his club was noted, few men gave more handsomely than Mr. Orr.

I am inclined to think that the realisation of all his political aim and ambition consisted in the tagging of two labials to his name, the privilege of talking of "Russell" and "Disraeli" on familiar terms, and the pleasure of seeing his name in the division lists of the *Times*. It was an expensive taste, but the wealthiest banker in wealthy Lombard Street could afford to indulge it.

Mr. Orr was a married man, and the father of a family. His wife was a fat vulgar woman, who, unlike her husband, had been unable to accommodate herself readily to the society into which she rose with the rising fortunes of the bank. But society did not appear to discover any failings in her. In the eyes of the world a doll would be a "dear, good, clever creature" if it were only dressed in tissue of gold.

There were three children. The eldest was a girl, who had been christened Honoria, in affectionate remembrance of a fictitious ancestress in blue satin and a broad-leaved hat, who smiled with a feebly surprised air, as if startled at her relations with this family, from a massive gold frame over the sideboard in the dining-room. If family portraits converse—and one certainly hears of "speaking likenesses"—how strange must have been the colloquies held in that dining room! The long-haired cavalier in the breast-plate, with a very hot siege going on in the background, must have wondered what he had in common with the divine whose locks were cropped short, and who had one finger slipped between the pages of what should, from all appearance, have been a pamphlet condemnatory of Charles Stuart, "falsely styled king." As for the stout gentleman, with a three-cornered hat and a good round stomach, who resided in the immediate neighbourhood of two pillars and a very red curtain, he must have been at a loss to trace his relationship to the tall pale lady in white satin, who was pretending to pet a parrot, and whose feet must have been very cold in such thin slippers, on a floor of black and white marble lozenges.

These, however, were the ancestors whom Miss Honoria Orr and her brother and sister were brought to reverence and regard. Honoria did not reflect the charms of the beautiful women in the family pictures. She was a tall, pale, delicate

girl, who was afflicted with weak eyes and timidity. Between her and the other two children there was a very considerable difference in age. For ten years after Honoria's birth Mr. Orr was under the painful impression that he would have to leave his wealth to an heiress. But the fates decided otherwise. To his vast delight, after that lapse of time, Mrs. Orr presented him with a son, and in the following year with a second daughter; after which feat she appeared to consider that she had done the state sufficient service.

Unfortunately the son and heir was a delicate boy, and showed but little promise. Great accordingly was the anguish of Mr. Orr's soul.

Of what avail was it that every day of his life he rolled into the City from his mansion in Grosvenor Place, in a yellow chariot, with two spanking horses and a couple of grand footmen? What comfort could he draw from the coat of arms emblazoned on the yellow panels;—or, on a bend gules three bezants; crest, a bezzant, winged gules; motto, "Ore rotundo"? What did it matter that men on 'Change bowed down to him as a sort of Rothschild of British manufacture, and that foreign Princes and Grand Dukes borrowed money of him, presenting him with rings and snuff boxes, rough with diamonds, in acknowledgment of his lending them thousands at goodness knows what per cent.? What did it benefit him that he rode home at night to such a table and such wines as would respectively ruin the digestion and goutify the joints of a man with a constitution of iron?

What, in short, is a canary-coloured chariot, or a resplendent coat-armour, or a thriving business, or clear turtle-soup, or thirty-four port worth to Mr. Orr, if he cannot purchase health and brains for his only son?

If you find out the cleverest physician in the world, and, instead of his guinea, give him that bank note for a million, which is framed and glazed in Threadneedle Street (and a pretty picture it makes too), and which a foreign prince, on having it shown him, was about to pocket as a delicate cadeau from the directors;—that cleverest physician cannot do more for you than he would for the twenty-one shillings—ay, or for nothing, for the poor creature who crawls to his gratis consultation.

The cleverest physician in the world could no more infuse healthy vitality into that stunted child of Mr. Orr's than he could raise him from the dead, even though half the business in Lombard Street were offered as a reward for his skill. Nor could the wisest and most patient teacher in the world

prevent the learning and morals which he poured into that lad's one ear from coming out of the other, because there was nothing between to intercept the lessons.

What can become of such a lad? What does become of such lads? A debased youth, a loose life, a bankruptcy of health and wealth, and things even dearer—the decrepitude of old age at thirty, and the workhouse or lunatic asylum, or, in mercy, the grave soon after.

No wonder that Mr. Orr was so sad and staid a man that people in the Stranger's Gallery at the House thought he must be a very wise man, and mistook him for some Parliamentary star.

To think he had toiled and moiled and worn his life out, till his forehead was seamed with wrinkles and his hair sprinkled with gray, to accumulate wealth for this poor idiot child. It was enough to make a man sad and grave. But perhaps it was not this alone that threw a dark shadow over the prosperous banker's face. It is fair to suppose that a large business like his was a cause of anxiety.

Mr. Orr was a very pious person, too, and pious persons as a rule are the reverse of cheerful. Mr. and Mrs. Orr "sat under" the Reverend Ichabod Inwards, at a fashionable chapel in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Place, and went every Sunday regularly to be edified. And if the perpetual parading of punishment to come is edifying, they were very fortunate. For the Reverend Ichabod Inwards was a sort of spiritual bull-fighter, and treated a sinner as a *torrero* treats the animal out of whom he is to get amusement for the assembled multitude. He plunged darts into his side, and waved flags before his eyes, and drove the poor wretch to madness with a plentiful display of fireworks and a strong smell of brimstone.

It was a very noble sight to see Mr. and Mrs. Orr drop down the middle aisle, like proud galleys with silken sails, and with a tender, in the shape of a canary-covered footman, bearing their devotional books. When they declared very loudly that they were miserable sinners, it went to one's heart to think how condescending it was of them to meet poor creatures, who had not a banking account, on their own ground. One felt them to be so very different from the stock sinner whom Mr. Inwards was to produce in the pulpit presently, and put to wholesome torture. He would as soon have thought of standing on his head on the pulpit cushion as of serving up Mr. Orr with brimstone trimmings. The collections at the chapel fattened extensively on the ostentatiously extensive charities of the banker. Mr. Orr was a splendid

donor. He did charities as other men invest in the Stocks. His cheques were measured by the extent to which donations were advertised: given, the circulation of the list of subscribers, and it was a very simple sum in Proportion to discover the magnitude of Mr. Orr's donation.

He was a great and good man, a pious and generous Christian.

Virtue is its own reward, however, and it is comforting to think that his conduct was not unproductive of profit. In whom could the widow and the fatherless repose confidence (in the shape of their little all of worldly wealth) if not in this open-handed friend of the distressed? In whom could respectable people trust if not in this respectable chapel-goer?

If Mr. Orr ever struck a balance between his piety and his profits, he must have found the latter heavily indebted to the former. And, as I observed before, it is a comfort to think so!

I have said Mr. Orr was a careful speculator in his charities. He was a shrewd calculator in every relation of life. He never threw a sovereign away. He never expended money without a fair expectation of a return. Why should he?

In every sphere of life the circulating medium of that sphere is a thing to be taken care of. You and I, reader of mine, should think little of a handful of shells. But a native of India or Africa would think twice ere he flung away a cowry. It is current coin, and he is as careful of it as we are of pence and shillings. In Mr. Orr's province pence and shillings are comparative cowries; the sovereign was his standard of value, and he dealt very tenderly with money even of that low denomination. He was—to confess the truth—mean! But then when a man has coined his youth and manhood, his health and hopes into yellow metallic discs, you can hardly be surprised if he sets store by them.

How much of the worship of Mammon has mingled with the form of devotion just over at Mr. Ichabod Inward's chapel? The gentlemen have all read the names of the makers in the crowns of their hats twice, and the ladies, rising, give one final sweeping survey of the bonnets, and pew-doors begin to bang, as the organ, after a premonitory wheeze and whistle, launches forth the voluntary. The Rev. I. Inwards has emerged from the velvet cushion into which he plunged as if about to take a refreshing header after the warmth of his own description of torments to come, and is gazing around blandly, but asking himself secretly whether he can have done

anything to offend the Plumperanns, whose pew has been vacant now for three consecutive Sundays.

The canary-coloured footman has collected the elegantly-bound volumes from the Orr pew. Mrs. and Miss Orr, shaking out reefs of silk and muslin, are being towed out of chapel in the wake of papa, who holds a very spotless beaver above the heads of the departing congregation, and bows in a furtive manner to acquaintances who catch his eye—as if it were wrong to be a friend to anyone in church.

Very much in the same order they walk home, with the yellow footman behind, carrying the books. One cannot help feeling how self-denying it is of persons, who keep a footman, to go to Divine worship at all. Why could not the menial who carries the books do that duty for them? Such humility is positively affecting, and I feel inclined to take off my hat to Mr. Orr, as the crossing-sweeper does—and gets nothing for his civility, there being no one in sight to be a spectator of charity except the footman aforesaid, who is not to be deceived by appearances, in the face of his closely-pared wages, and narrowly-watched perquisites.

When the procession reaches Grosvenor Place, the yellow one thunders portentously at the door, which is flung open, and the Orr family enters, conscious of having done a duty, which might have been avoided, in a very proper and instructive manner.

Lunch is announced presently—a formal and chilling meal gone through, in the presence and under the superintendence of two canary-coloured footmen and a butler, who looks like an evangelical minister with an inflamed nose. It is one of the great privileges of wealth to have your wine administered to you in doses, as if it were medicine, by a solemn person who has the power of making you drink what he likes, and to have your soups and side dishes handed to you with a delicate garnishing of hair powder—a luxury for which you have to pay something handsome annually to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

After lunch there is an adjournment to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Orr receives a few callers. She does this under a sort of tacit protest, which she makes quite appreciable to her visitors. She would not think of seeing anyone on Sundays if it were not that on other days Mr. Orr is engaged in the City at the usual calling time, and she must, therefore, consent to sacrifice some of her scruples. But by way of a corrective, the drawing-room table is cleared of the handsomely bound secular volumes, which adorn it in the week, and in their place Mr. Inward's collections of sermons,

ponderous tracts, and works of controversial theology, are strewn upon the velvet pile, with other "good" books—so good that apparently a very little of them goes a long way, for few of them are cut.

In one of the pauses between two calls, when the last visitor has been removed in a state of collapse by the canary-coloured, and before a fresh one is ready to be served up, a conversation takes place between papa and mamma, Honoria being seated at the piano, from which she is extorting a very agonised sacred melody.

"My dear," says Mrs. Orr, sitting on the sofa, watching her husband, who, with his elbows on his knees, is bending forward over the fire, breaking with the poker the little gaseous bubbles that exude from the fusing coal, "My dear, it is time we either sent Algernon to school, or got a teacher for him."

"Humph! I suppose he is getting old enough. What do you propose?"

"Well, if it would not be too expensive, I think Eton or some such school sounds best, my dear."

"The public schools are expensive—they would be, at least, if he is to hold the position I should like him to do. Besides, he's delicate, and there is a good deal of fagging and bullying at these places. A private tutor, and then when he gets older and stronger either Oxford or Cambridge—Oxford, if possible, it's so much more gentlemanly."

"Could the tutor teach Alicia too, my dear? It would be a saving, and she must begin to learn soon."

"It will be better, perhaps, to engage a governess; they are cheaper, and he doesn't want much managing. He'd be quite tractable enough for a woman to teach."

"Yes, and she might be useful to me in other ways, my dear. Honoria's coming out now, and she might be very useful altering dresses for her."

"Very well, then, you'd better look about for one."

"What ought one to give her, my dear?"

"Not much. I shouldn't offer much. If you want one that would be generally useful, you must offer a low salary, or you'll get hold of some stuck-up miss that won't do anything. Those who are glad to work cheap will be ready to do more for the money."

"There, I never should have thought of that!"

"I know it's the case. I remember my mother gave Jane's governess fifty pounds a year, and she gave notice because she was told to hem some tablecloths, or something of the sort; and we got another for half the money, who was as useful as a lady's maid to Jane."

"Shall I advertise, dear, or go to look for one? I suppose you can get them at the registration places, the same as other servants?"

"No, I fancy not. But you can write and ask Jane; she has engaged one for her children."

"Ah, to be sure; I had forgotten that, my dear. She will be able to tell me everything about wages and all."

At this moment there came a knock at the front door, whereupon Miss Orr fluttered timorously away from the piano, Mrs. Orr snatched up a volume of the Reverend Ichabod Inward's Sermons, and opened on one touching "Our duty towards our neighbours," while Mr. Orr plunged into a small pamphlet by Scarifier, on the "Revision of the Liturgy;" so that presently, when the canary-coloured announced "Mr. Two-hill," that amiable and nervous young gentleman felt that he was ushered into the presence of all that was lovely and pious and patriotic.

On the Monday following this cheerful Sunday, Mrs. Orr despatched a note to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Bullyan, touching the right means of procuring a governess for Algernon and Alicia. In the course of a few days, Mrs. Bullyan replied at length—a whole sheet of pink note-paper, crossed. The result of this correspondence was that before long there appeared in the supplement of the *Times*, but a few paragraphs removed from the "wanteds," referring to cooks, housemaids, and laundresses, the following advertisement:—

**R**ESIDENT GOVERNESS.—WANTED, in a Gentleman's Family, a lady, not over 30 years of age, as GOVERNESS, to take the entire charge of two young Children, and instruct them in English, French, and Music. She must be a member of the Church of England, cut out and make children's clothes, and wash and dress them. Salary £30, and all found.—Apply, etc. etc.

I think I can see some of my readers smile at this, and set it down as an exaggeration. I can assure them it is nothing of the sort. With a few slight alterations which the state of the present copyright law renders necessary, in order to avoid difficulties, that advertisement is a mere repetition of one which I have seen in the *Times*. You have only to look at the Governess column of the supplement and you will learn that I am not in the slightest degree overcharging the picture. There are, you will there discover, many rich and respectable people who are content to trust the future and the hereafter, the characters and the morals of their children to a person whose wages they fix at a mere shade above what they give a housemaid, and a good deal below what they give a cook.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE UNFOLDING OF A DULL DAWN.

THE morning broke gray and chill over Polvrehan. After the quenching of the stars, came no rosy light to kiss the hill-tops. A pale dawn, like the ghost of daylight, stole upward; and the purple of night mingling with it, an ashen sky was all that resulted as evidence of morn. Rella caught the infection, and instead of bustling by blue and bubble-beaded, shuddered along a leaden-coloured stream. And the winds that swept down the valley were weird half-hushed breezes, in which the trees seemed to wave their arms mournfully, and croon like the "keeners" at an Irish funeral.

But though it was a dull day that broke thus over Polvrehan, it could exert no depressing influence on the life which abounded all about there. The kingfisher went flashing over the stream to his favourite perch; the rabbits were leaping over the fern; and the rooks flapped slowly a-field overhead. Up burst the starlings from the osiers, and hurtled away over the hills. The lark sprang from his lowly nest in the furrow, and mounted—up—up—up—as if he were trying to see where the sun was, that he was so late.

And if life went on all the same in the little valley, death was equally busy. Down flashed the kingfisher from his perch—a gleam—a struggle—and the jewelled bird was back again on his naked branch overhanging the water, with a fine fat trout in his strong beak. There was a rustle in the fern, and a lithe stoat, springing like a snake upon a passing rabbit, brought him to the ground. In vain poor bunny struggled and shrieked; the sharp cruel muzzle was buried in his neck, and his murderer would never quit his hold till he had drained the last drop of his life-blood. The rooks with outspread pinions settled on the furrows in the ploughed land, and then there was much mourning in the families of grubs and worms. The starlings, whirring off to the pastures, took their share in the destruction of the insect world. The lark having finished his matins, and despairing of seeing the sun, was down hunting for food for his young.

Meanwhile man—the greatest destroyer of all—was to be shortly a-field. The poacher was creeping along under the hedge-side; and the gamekeeper was brushing through the

dewy meadows; and Hodge the ploughboy, with his rusty firearm, was sallying forth to blaze away at any furred or feathered thing he met.

Life, you see, busy everywhere—and death in life.

The household at Polvrehan is astir. The blinds are drawn up one after another, as if the house, awakening, were slowly opening its eyes to watch the misty cold morning, as it breaks.

Presently there comes a knock at Marian's bed-room door.

"Come in. What is it?" for it is early, she thinks, to be roused.

"It's me, my dear," says Nancy Vian, good old soul, the housekeeper of Polvrehan—and when I say housekeeper I mean general servant—a Caleb Balderstone in petticoats.

"What's the matter, Nancy?"

"My dear, the master's bed's never been slept in all night, and he's locked up the study. I reckon he's poorly, dear."

Marian sighed, for she knew what that meant. Of late she had listened and waited once or twice for that stumbling uncertain step on the stair, and listened in vain, till she dropped off to sleep from sheer weariness.

On these occasions he had generally been out at some festive gathering, and Nancy had waited up for him. Poor old Nancy was nurse to this poor fellow, who was drinking himself into a second childhood. She used to see him safe to bed on these occasions, and take away the light. But for such care that quiet valley might have been lit up some night with the ruddy glare of the burning house of Polvrehan.

But sometimes latterly he had come back in such a state that Nancy had consented to leave him, as he wished, to sleep on the sofa in the study. He had sense enough left to know he could not get up stairs without making a noise that would wake the girls; and as he always believed himself sufficiently cunning to have concealed his failing entirely from them, he was very scrupulous about disturbing them in this way.

As he had not been out anywhere on the night before this particular morning, Nancy had not thought of seeing to his retirement to bed, and only found out, on rising in the morning, that he was still down stairs. Even that would not have disturbed her; but when she found the study door locked, and failed to obtain admission by knocking, as loud as she dared for fear of disturbing the house and attracting attention, she grew a little fidgety, and went off at once to take council with Marian.

"I'll slip on my things, Nancy, and be down with you in a minute. He was not out anywhere last night."

"No, my dear ; I thoft he was in bed as sound as churches when I went to bed, and I was terrible tired and rheumatic a bit, and glad enough to get between the sheets."

With a vague terror that she could not shake off, Marian got up and dressed hurriedly. The silence of the house when Nancy went away to see that her kettle boiled—she knew what Carlyon would want as soon as he waked—was very awful to the poor girl. The clock in the passage had never ticked off the steps of time towards eternity so loudly before. What was this stifling sensation she experienced, as if the house were a corpse and she buried alive with it? A fever seemed coursing through her veins, and made her hands tremble so that she could scarcely fasten her dress. She dashed some cold water—how cool, how deliciously refreshing!—over her face, and then flinging up the window looked the cold dull day in the face. Compared with the terrible stillness of the house, the dawn seemed positively sunny and joyous. There was health in the breeze that blew upon her burning forehead.

She hastened down stairs, and knocked at the study door—once, twice, quietly. Then becoming nervous, and perhaps to break the terrible spell of silence, she knocked louder—and louder yet.

No answer ; not a sound ; not even a breath to be heard in that locked chamber.

The terrible truth for which the instinct of horror that smote her in her own room had been trying to prepare her, came upon her now vividly, and past all power of denial.

She turned from the door. For a moment she and Nancy stood face to face. And in the young girl's eyes the old woman read the terrible truth.

"God help us, not *that*, I trust, in his mercy!"

Marian shook her head mournfully, and smote her two hands together as if in a sudden spasm of pain.

What was to be done? They stood pondering for a minute or two. They knew the worst, it seemed to them, and of that knowledge came that peculiar calmness and clear sight which, in the immediate and inevitable presence of danger and distress, seem to come to us as a mercy direct from Heaven.

The same idea occurred to both at once, and each divined the other's thought.

"Yes! follow me," said Marian, and she hastened out at the window opening on the lawn, and passed round to the front of the house. The lawn was already alive with the feathered pensioners who came daily for the crumbs from the breakfast table. They startled away from their benefactress as she came hurriedly out. She did not notice them or hear Rella's

prattling, or heed the lovely beds of blossom already wooed by constant bees who were not to be frightened from their courtship by a dull day.

As she passed round the corner of the house, Jock, the housedog, jumped at a bound to the end of his chain, and choked himself off-hand with delight, at what he considered a visit in his special honour. But he got neither look nor caress. The swing of his tail was checked fitfully—his ears drooped—and after standing a minute the very picture of forlorn fidelity, he slunk back to his barrel of straw, dragging his chain mournfully clinking after him.

And now the old woman and Marian have reached the front windows—the windows of that closed study—which reach almost to the ground. They are not hasped. In this quiet valley they never thought of barricading their houses; Jock was sufficient guard against tramps and thieves, who were mere provincials—against casual tramps, not professional and scientific housebreakers, who have a large capital invested in the finished implements of their business, and who even have a balance at their bankers' at times. The windows were not hasped. The shutters were not barred, they were only pushed to; one pair were a little apart—just a chink—through which the daylight was doubtless streaming in. To what did that finger of dawn point?

The windows were not hasped. The shutters were not barred. Just now Marian was beating at that locked door as though she wished to force her way into the room. She would have done so, perhaps, had she possessed the strength. But the lock and the hinges were stout, and it would have needed a strong man to break open that door.

But now, where she stood in front of the house, the windows, I repeat yet again, were not hasped and the shutters were not barred. Still she hesitated. When the terrible truth was shut up within the bolted door she burned to penetrate its mystery and know all. Now, when at the touch of a hand the window would open and the shutters fall back and show her all she but now desired to know, she was struck motionless.

Nancy Vian raised the sash. The damps of morning made it cling to the sill for a moment, and when it rose it gave a subdued shriek that made Marian's blood curdle. Another brief breathing space of delay—they listened to learn whether they had disturbed Carlyon. There was no necessity for their doing so.

Marian, with a nervous, hurried gesture, pushed back the shutters. The pencil of light in the darkened room widened out, and the day shone in.

The two women stepped into the room, and stole to the sofa on which George Carlyon was asleep.

He was sleeping very soundly indeed ; so soundly, that the clamour at the door could not rouse him, so soundly that the shriek of the raised sash could not disturb him ; so soundly that no earthly sound shall ever again wake him.

This Nancy learns the first. Instinctively she lays her hand on that of George Carlyon, and the hand she touches is marble.

"Aw, my dear, my dear," she sobs, as she turns round and catches Marian in her arms, "Aw, my dear, he have a-gone—he have a-gone. Aw, my dear, what shall us do ? God rest him, poor dear, for he have a-suffered, I know, and God help his poor childer !"

And then Nancy, loosing her hold of Marian, who stood motionless—stupified by the certainty of what she had dreaded—slid down beside her, kneeling by the sofa, and praying and weeping from a heart full to bursting.

By-and-by Marian began to recover herself a little. Then she too fell on her knees beside her father's corpse and kissed the clay-cold forehead. And at that touch the fountain of tears was unsealed, and the grief which had been so speechless until then found an utterance in half-choked sobs and broken lamentings.

So these two women knelt by the body, and in the meantime Nature, which seems so heartless but is so tenderly thoughtful—for why should your sorrow or mine, your death or mine, blot the beauty of the universe for the rest of mankind ?—tenderly thoughtful Nature worked out all her wonderful phenomena of daybreak.

A step crushing on the gravel recalls Nancy to the consciousness of her duties. She creeps noiselessly to the window and sees Martin, the lad who looks after the pony. Him she despatches at once to Mr. Cormack. It is useless to send for the doctor, she knows :—it is not the first death she has seen, and she is perfectly aware that nothing can restore warmth to that icy hand she touched a little while since.

As she returns to where Marian is kneeling, she catches sight of something on the table which surprises her into an exclamation. Marian looks up, and following the direction of the old woman's eyes, she too sees something on the table that makes her turn cold.

On the table is an empty brandy bottle, a decanter with some sherry in it, and a wine glass. But the dregs of liquid in that glass are not the dregs of either sherry or brandy. A few drops of brown strange-smelling fluid have collected in the bottom. Two large brown spots have fallen on the papers

that lie on the table, and, as an artist would say, lead the eye to the place where lies an empty phial.

And the label on that phial is "LAUDANUM," and beneath that label is another, on which is printed in large, black, impressive letters the word POISON. The anodyne which Henry Cormack gave his friend and partner on the evening before this fatal, dull dawn—this gray sorrowful daybreak of which Marian now, at last, seems to learn the meaning—has brought to the ruined gambler the only real anodyne—death.

"I—I—did not know that he took *this*," whispers Marian to the old woman.

"No, my dear, nor he dedn't. I never knowed him take it before, and I've a-knowed all as he ever took, poor dear."

"Then——"

But Marian had not the heart, the courage to put into words the awful, the overwhelming conclusion which was thus forced upon her. Nancy understood the thought, and felt that, shocking though it was, it was the only solution of the mystery.

Hitherto she had touched the corpse reverently; dead George Carlyon was "the master" still, fondly as she regarded him. The loyal old domestic had wept and prayed by the body, had even clasped the cold hand, but this was no more than a servant might do. But now, when she discovered this truth, which made his daughter shrink and cower before it, it seemed to her that the dead man had need of friendship and sympathy. His misfortune—this last dark terrible deed, at which I will only hint—seemed to have brought him to a level, at which even her love might be a comfort and solace.

She bent over and kissed him on the cheek, murmuring—

"My poor dear, you'm not accountable for't. 'Twas sorrow and drink brought you to it, when ye didn't scarce know what you was doing. My poor dear, God forgive you and us all."

Marian took the poor old woman—the kindly, faithful, affectionate old creature, who had nursed her on her knee, and rocked her to sleep so often—by both hands, and kissed her on the lips; and then once more the whole extent of her bereavement, and the appalling circumstances surrounding her father's death, came upon her, just as the widening dawn poured into that mournful chamber, and she fell on the old woman's neck and sobbed most piteously—heartrendingly.

What is this song that rings through the house? What sweet, clear voice is this that reaches this scene of sorrow and anguish?

Tripping down the stairs, with one white hand on the balustrades, dressed in a soft muslin that flutters like wings about

her as she descends the sombre staircase, with her golden hair catching every faintest notion of sunlight that is afloat on such a dull morning—here comes bonnie Alice from her quiet little bed-room, where she has been dreaming of her fairy prince, while her sister has been waking to such horror below.

What is the song she sings, as she glides down the old staircase?

“Ay ojuelos verdes,  
Ay los mis ojuelos,  
Ay hagan los cielos  
Que de mi te acuerdes!”

It is the Spanish ballad which Captain Cormack was teaching her last night—the ballad which he taught her with such happy good humour after he had left her father with two things staring him in the face—two things for which her father was chiefly indebted to him—ruin and poison. For Henry Cormack had just as much brought bankruptcy on his friend and partner, as he had placed in his hands in the little phial the tempting anodyne, which was so powerful to set grief and distress and perplexity to sleep for ever.

How discordantly that sweet voice smote on the ears of the two women in the presence of the dead!

Marian glided from the room—met Alice at the foot of the stairs, and before the astonished girl could ask the meaning of her disturbed looks, placed her finger on her lips, and hushed the song. Then she led her into the pretty little parlour, opening on the lawn, where they had spent so many happy hours, and then and there she told her what had happened. What could Alice do but weep for the fond father who had so petted and caressed her! She was wrung by a very agony of grief, which her delicate and yielding nature could not resist. Hysterical and fainting fits followed each other in rapid succession, and the poor girl was carried up stairs, and put to bed, scarcely less insensible than George Carlyon himself, lying there on the sofa in the study, with the sun, now at last escaped from the imprisoning clouds, coming round to look in at the windows in front.

As the sun streams in through those windows presently, the figure of a man intercepts the rays suddenly, and its long shadow flung across the floor seems to creep like a deadly serpent towards the couch where the body lies.

It is Henry Cormack.

The first thing he does is to pour some wine into the glass with the brown sediment, rinse it out, and fling away the con-

tents on the gravel outside the window. He wipes the glass carefully on his coat-tail, pours a little more sherry into it, and then takes up the phial and puts it into his pocket. Then he leans over the body of his late partner, and a smile of contempt and triumph passes over his cold, cunning face.

"I've been harder pushed than you, and yet I never was such a fool as this," he murmurs to himself; "I wonder he had pluck enough left in him even to do this act of cowardice."

Then he turns away—leaves the room by the window he came in by, and enters the house in the regular manner, and asks to see Marian.

The interview is a long one. He soon elicits from her that she and Nancy had seen the phial, and drawn the one inevitable conclusion. He then advises her to keep her suspicions a secret, and tells her what he has done to remove all trace of the wretched deed. For this forethought and promptitude I need hardly say she is deeply grateful. She is the more grateful because it is an action she would never have suspected him capable of.

The next step is to send for Dr. Johns, in his twofold capacity of physician and coroner of the district. He comes in the course of the afternoon, and is very much shocked, but for the sake of his professional reputation says that he always feared this, and had warned Carlyon frequently. Then he makes arrangements for holding the inquest, which he promises to contrive so as to spare the girls all the pain he can. In consideration of which he expects—and gets—a glass of hot gin and water from Nancy, who knows his weakness and the strength he admires.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## "VISITATION OF GOD."

"MARN'N, Muster Rosewarne."

"Quite well, I thank'ee. How be yeu?"

"Not much to brag o' And how be Muster Lusky?"

"Oh, bra'ave, thank'ee."

"Tur'ble sudden, this here, warn't it now?"

"Ees sure. Out like a snuff. How's yer turmuts lookin'?"

"Vairish. What are you for?"

"Well, I waen't take anythin 'til after verdick, I thank'ee."

"Haw! haw! That's a good 'un! Did'ee hear 'un, Garge? I was axin mun what he was for—meaning sudden death or nat'ral causes, and he thoft I was axin of 'un to take a crem o' liquor."

"Haw! haw! haw! That's a good 'un, anyhow!"

"How's Messis Rundle, then?"

"Aw, her's comf'table enough, I reckon."

"Es't a boy or a gal?"

"Oh, tes a boy this time. And how be your good lady, Mester Chynow'th?"

"Whoy, her's a down to Truro along wi' her friends for a cha'ange loike. You'n best coom and see a chap now he's a bagelor, I'm thinkin."

"Oh, here com'th Doctor Johns at la'ast. I reckon we'll soon get un auver now."

"Who's voreman?"

"Muster Lusky, in coorse."

"Ees, sure, Muster Lusky he be voreman."

"I reckon you chaps is most of 'ee for sudden death, eh?" asks Mr. Lusky of his brother jurymen, to whom my readers are indebted for the above very edifying conversation.

"From what I can hear 'tis most like that, Muster Lusky," says Mr. Rosewarne.

"Well, I'm agen it then," says Mr. Chynoweth, "we've been having a many of them lately, and I'm for cha'ange. We shall have yon young feller as writes them articles in the *Gazette* sayin' as we can't find nowt else to say."

"Well, I reckon, us need'n mind a poor half-starved chap like yon, a poor critter as writes for the papers, Mr. Chynow'th."

"Maybe you don't go to ma'ark't zo often as I do, or yeu wadn't like for to be made vun of down to Bell tap."

"There's a bra've deal in what yeu'm both a-sayin' of," says Mr. Lusky, interrupting in the interests of peace.

"Let's see if we ca'ant fix on summut new to plaze Muster Chynow'th then, Muster Lusky."

"I baint for tryin' new verdicks," interposes another juryman, "we had a inques' down to Bodmin a while since, and that there chap he made a pretty face and laughed at us vine, I can tell ye. And what vor? Why, on'y becos we axed Muster Gilbert, the coroner, for to append to a verdick of 'Found drowned in a gravel-pit' the explanation 'there being water in the place.' I'm agen anythin' new."

"What's the other regular verdicks, Muster Lusky? you ought for to know, for you hev sat on more bodies nor most people."

"Why there's 'Accidental death,' and 'Justifiable homi-some'ut ;' and, let me see, why, 'Nat'ral causes,' and 'Fellow deceased,' and—and—there now, I'm certain sure there's another, but I ca'ant reca'al 'un. Oh! 'Visitation of God,' that's it; and I'm thinking it's the very one as we'm a-looking for."

"Ay, that hur be!" is the general chorus.

"Mind ye, he's a clever chap is Muster Lusky," the jurymen whisper to each other.

By this time the coroner, having had an interview with the girls, enters the kitchen where the jurymen are assembled, and leads them into the study to view the body.

This ceremony over, the coroner and jury return to the kitchen, and the inquiry is opened in due form.

Dr. Johns summonses Nancy Vian, who gives her evidence with tolerable firmness. The coroner explains to the jury that Miss Marian Carlyon can add nothing of any importance to the servant's testimony, and says that, although he will call her at once, if the jury require it, he hopes they will think fit to spare her the very trying ordeal. The jury, after a brief consultation, consent—not without reluctance, it must be admitted—to waive the attendance of Miss Carlyon.

"Then, gentlemen, the only further evidence I have to place before you is medical evidence. As I was the late Mr. Carlyon's physician"—Johns is not a physician, but before using the term he has looked round the room to see that none of his brother practitioners are present—"I am the only person in a position to tell you with any degree of certainty what his health and habit of body was."

Thereupon the doctor gives a description of George Carlyon's

constitution, and the failing, which had, as the doctor hinted, led to his death, with a great deal of professional slang and lots of hard words, at which the jury wagged their heads sagely, and said, "Ah, what a 'stonishin' clever chap yon doctor be, to be sure."

As his not very lucid explanation of the dead man's symptoms left the jury in a fog, of which they did not feel inclined to admit the existence, there was a slight pause.

"If there is any explanation, gentlemen, which I can afford, I shall be most happy to do so," says the coroner.

"Well, then, ax, mun!" says the jurymen to his neighbour, who has been carrying on a whispered controversy with him for the last minute or so. His neighbour, thus exhorted, looks at Johns, grins all across his face, and says,

"Look'ee here, then, Muster Coroner, can 'ee tell I what's the difference atween 'nat'ral causes' and 'visitation of God?' I should loike to know before we begin decidin' on the merits of the ca'se."

"Well," says the doctor, leaning back in his chair, and gazing at the ceiling in order to collect his soaring thoughts. "Well, the difference is this. You see, if anybody dies and you are called to hold an inquest, and there is no particular reason why he should not have died, why that is 'natural causes.' But if anybody dies, and it appears to you on the inquest that there is no reason in particular why he should die, that is 'visitation of God.' Do you understand my explanation?"

"Aw, yes!" answers the querist. But he does not understand it nevertheless, and small blame to him, for if ever there were an instance of distinction without a difference it was the doctor's explanation of the two verdicts.

"Then I'm thinkin', gen'l'men," says Mr. Lusky, glancing round the table, "after the evidence as we have a-heard we ca'ant do no better than say what we settled afore the inquest, eh?"

The other jurymen nod assent.

"Well, coroner, we gives it 'Visitation o' God' then, and I don't think as there's anything as we can add"—and he glances once more round the table.

"Mightn't us say as we hope as precautions uil be taken for to guard against the sa'am in futur; we used always to put that on in minin' accidents down west—and this here was quite as unexpected?" asks a farmer at the further end of the table, a recent arrival in the neighbourhood.

But his suggestion is promptly negatived, and Dr. Johns receives the verdict, and then pays the jurymen for their

attendance. Whereupon they adjourn to the "Cock and Spurs," at Merrinect, where they promptly expend the small remuneration in glasses of gin and water, or cider.

The doctor has an interview with Marian before he leaves the house, and tells her what the inquest has resulted in. Then he mounts his pony, and goes off to see a patient in the neighbourhood, who is not in ill-health, but is very glad to see the doctor, and stand him some grog while he tells him all about Carlyon.

In the evening the coroner returns home in a very comfortable mood, and proceeds to make up his books—no very easy task under the circumstances, for he has to shut one eye in order to get a fair sight of the figures. First of all, he charges for a visit to the patient he called on, as I have just stated. Then he charges mileage, in his capacity as coroner, from his house to Polvrehan and back. Then he charges a guinea for medical evidence. He wishes he could charge two for a *post mortem*, but Marian was so very much opposed to the idea, and so begged him to dispense with the examination, that he had been obliged to consent to her wish. To make matters square, however, he enters an additional guinea against Carlyon in the bill, which he makes out with the intention of sending it in after the funeral is over. Finally, he toddles down to the Bell, where he spends a very jolly night, and whence he returns home, like a cutter beating up the wind, with a multiplicity of tacks, and not always steering as well as he might.

It must have been very edifying to hear him at the Bell hiccuping out his sorrow that poor Carlyon would drink so—"it was that that killed him, poor devil. Here, Charles, bring me another six of Plymouth gin."

He liked his drop did Dr. Johns, and was a most amusing fellow in his cups. We want a little enlivening after all the sad story of last chapter, so I'll venture on a short anecdote.

The doctor had spent the evening at a patient's, some eight miles or so from his own house, and was returning on his pony, in a very happy frame of mind, when his hat was blown off. He got down and recovered his headgear, and while doing so became impressed with the notion that he had some one with him. Whether it was that he was suffering from a sort of double inner vision, and was conscious of himself twice over, or whether he took a post or the pony for a companion, I cannot tell, but he said with much generosity, "Very well, ole f'ler, we'll ride and tie!"

Now the custom of "ride and tie" in Cornwall—I don't know if it exists elsewhere, or if so, whether the method is

the same—may be thus described. Two men and one horse are to start from a certain point. One man mounts and rides forward to a predetermined place, dismounts, ties up the horse, and walks on. His friend follows on foot, comes up presently to the tethered nag, looses it, mounts, rides on, overtakes and passes his friend, going on for another pre-arranged stage, at the end of which he in turn dismounts and leaves the steed tied up. In short, each traveller makes his journey in a continuous sandwich of alternate equestrian and pedestrian exercise.

The doctor then, as I said, observed to his imaginary companion, "Very well, ole feller, we'll ride and tie!" and thereupon he tied his pony up to the gate and walked home!

If the doctor spent the evening after the inquest pleasantly, I have no doubt the jurymen did the same. The day was a broken one, so they most of them settled down either at the inn or at the house of the nearest of them, and made a night of it.

At Polvrehan, however, all was weeping and mourning. Alice was still confined to her room, and was in a weak state, which required constant attention from Nancy. Marian was therefore left to take the head of affairs. Fortunately this brave woman had the strength and determination to see to all things needful. She made the necessary arrangements for her father's funeral, and having done that requested Captain Cormack to come over and assist her in the superintendence of her father's affairs.

The captain was just a little nervous about this interview. There were several revelations to be made which it would be rather difficult to put into words. But his hesitation was not from any delicate regard for Marian's feelings or the memory of the dead. All he was anxious about was his own position. For a long time he fenced with Marian, although she did not find it out. But at last he was brought to the point—quite unconsciously on her part however.

"Perhaps, all things considered, Captain Cormack, it will be better for my sister and myself to part with our share in the works."

"Your father has left no will?"

"No. He has always said that he entertained a horror of doing so—it was like signing one's death warrant he thought. But, under any circumstances, the property would come to us. We are his only living relations."

"You do not know, I presume, what his property is worth?"

"You must know, better than I do, the value of his share in the business."

"My dear Miss Carlyon, it cuts me to the heart to say so, but you must not count upon that——"

"What do you mean, Captain Cormack?"

"In consideration of very heavy advances—in fact, for the use of all the profits accruing to the firm—he gave me his share as security; and the loan has not been repaid."

"Good Heavens! I had no notion of this. However, Polvrehan, dear old Polvrehan, at least, is ours."

"I fear not. It is very cruel to have to tell you all this, but it is better that you should be undeceived. Polvrehan is very heavily mortgaged——"

"To whom?"

"To me. Your late father was indebted to me in very large sums indeed, Miss Carlyon. He appropriated, on the understanding I have mentioned, all the profits arising from the business. He borrowed money from me on the house and lands—in fact he sold me the moors—and the advances I have made have so far crippled me, that I shall be compelled to exert all the powers I hold over the property to enable me to escape bankruptcy."

"And all this money; what can he have done with it? We lived comfortably, but not extravagantly. What has become of it all?"

"He speculated in mines, as you are perhaps aware."

"Oh, that was so slight——"

"Pardon me, I have reason to know that he has for several years past been speculating—and unfortunately losing—largely in mining!"

"You knew this, and did not stop it, Captain Cormack?"

"How could I?"

"This is terrible indeed. Poor Alice! what will she do without her home comforts? I don't care for myself; I am well and strong, but she is too weak to have to fight her way in the world. To think of poor papa speculating in that mad way; he who I know was so strongly opposed to such gambling, as he used to call it. Why I remember, Captain Cormack, that when you were about to come into partnership you proposed to pay him some portion of the money in shares. He told me so, and said he hoped that would not part you, for he liked you very much, but he would not dabble in the mines."

"He consented to take them, however. Indeed, we could not have come to terms otherwise, for I had no money to give him."

Marian looked up at him sharply.

"You had no money?—and yet within so short a time after entering the business you are able to advance him large sums, and in short, buy him out. *You* must have been speculating in mines too, I think, Captain Cormack, but with better success than my father."

Cormack turned a sort of sickly salmon-colour. It was the nearest approach he could make to a blush. He felt he had made a mistake somehow, and that Marian had got him into a corner. But, like a rat under the same circumstances, he was obliged to be courageous and show his teeth.

"No, Miss Carlyon. I never speculated in mines after I had joined the firm. I did not risk the prosperity of the business by gambling."

"Nor did my father, Sir, until you became his partner. He seems to have adopted the pursuit you discarded. The coincidence is curious, to say the least."

"The suddenness of this discovery of your father's folly has naturally upset you, Miss Carlyon. I can overlook your hasty words."

"I think, Sir, I have discovered something more than my father's folly, as you so feelingly call it. It is strange that I could not see this before. I think we had better bring this interview to a close. In future we can communicate by letter. I must consult my father's solicitor about these mortgages and purchases and loans. It seems to me that the sudden affluence of a partner who had hardly enough money to purchase a share in the business, and the equally sudden poverty of my father, who had been the prosperous originator of the business, are things that will require—but may not bear—a little closer scrutiny."

Henry Cormack was no coward in this case. He was a cornered rat, and as fierce as a tiger in consequence. He bowed.

"By all means, Miss Carlyon. But I would warn you to beware. I can prove my title incontestably. At the same time, I will not have any *esclandre*—at least, if there be one, I will not be the only one concerned. If candid investigations are to be the order of the day, I had better at once call on Dr. Johns to reconsider his verdict by the light of the additional evidence I can assist him to." He took the little phial from his pocket. Marian trembled. She felt that she could not cope with this man. He was too unscrupulous and cunning. She sank into a chair.

"Fatherless—motherless—friendless!" she murmured.

Cormack saw her consternation, and triumphed.

"Come, Miss Carlyon. You will think better of this! You had better not attempt to coerce me. A system of annoyance cannot injure my title, and it would be simply suicidal in you to adopt it. I suppose," he added, with a sardonic grin, "the mania does not run in the blood," and he touched the breast-pocket of his coat where the phial was.

Marian did not answer him. She rose from her seat with an effort, and walked towards the door. He intercepted her.

"You see it is no use your trying to quarrel with me. I think we shall understand each other better after this. I mean you well. I would not press hard upon you. I will deal as generously with you——"

"As you think it will be advisable to do for the sake of the world's opinion. No. I would not take a favour at your hands for the world!"

"You attacked me. I met you, and defeated you with your own weapons. At all events, you need not think so badly of me."

"Let me go, Sir,"—he stretched out his hand, asking her to shake it. "Not for worlds! Stand aside, Sir."

"Come, come, this is a little too much. Listen, young lady. If you choose not to be friends, so be it, but it must be a private arrangement between ourselves. The world must not see it, or I shall have to give a reason for your dislike. In that case, I should have to begin by producing evidence that your father destroyed himself."

"Coward!"

"Will you shake hands?"

"I must. You compel me, in order to save the memory of my father—your benefactor."

"Well, you need not scowl as if I had killed him."

"I believe you did!" said Marian. It was a mere chance shot, fired from a sinking ship. She was goaded to it by his treatment. But the shot told. Cormack turned even whiter than was his natural complexion (which was white enough in all conscience), and was staggered for a second or so, during which Marian slipped out of the room.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE BARON OF LACQUOIGNE.

THERE is not an older barony in the long and distinguished roll of English nobility than that of Lacquoigne. The family came over with the Conqueror—the name is evidently Norman—and has furnished many an ornament to the Church, the Upper House, the Army, and the Bench.

Unfortunately, at intervals in the long line of Lords of Lacquoigne, there occurred thriftless and useless individuals who undid all the good which the wiser heirs had done for the family, and lavished the money they had taken pains to accumulate for the title; for the family had never been a wealthy one. In its early days it had found occasion to draw more Jew's teeth than almost any other noble line. In more civilised times it had been compelled to obtain money by less questionable and less expeditious means. The last lord had been a great director of public companies. The present nobleman dealt largely in rabbits. Another scion of the house had driven a profitable bargain with a railway, which was to run through a portion of the property; another had, in times before the Reform Bill, let the representation of a borough adjoining the Lacquoigne estates on very advantageous terms. As a rule they were shrewd men these Lords of Lacquoigne, and had a good eye for any scheme that would bring in money. If they could have gone into business, they would have become enormously wealthy. But the idea of connecting trade and title was too mad a one to be entertained for a moment. It is true one very wild son of the house, who cheerfully cleared himself of encumbrances by becoming bankrupt, had passed for a brief period as a horse-dealer; but of course that was a masquerade for a legal purpose. Those confounded tradesmen had bothered him so, that he paid them in their own coin—beat them with their own weapons. Deprived, by the disgusting spread of civilisation and humanity, of his hereditary right to plunge his creditors into “the darkest donjon under the castle moat” until they signed receipts in full, he had no other alternative than this.

The family estates, in a lovely nook of Somersetshire, were not very large. The house was a fine old place, but terribly ramshackle and out of repair. People went over from Axeford

to inspect Beaudechet, described in the local guide-books as "the ancestral and baronial residential mansion of the illustrious line of Barons of Lacquoigne, known to have been in their possession from time immemorial, or even a prior date."

The visitors after going over it, would shake their heads at its ruinous state, and say what a pity it was that so fine a family should be so poor. Why did the family, then, let these scouts see the nakedness of the land? Because the fees paid by the excursionists to the servants were considered in their wages. It was very fine of the *Axford Gazette* to speak in such high terms of "the generosity of Lord Lacquoigne in throwing open his magnificent grounds and splendid mansion to the public;" but the editor and proprietor must have been well aware of the little arrangement by which his lordship coked out his housekeeper's salary. Did not he himself send a copy of his paper to Beaudechet weekly, and agree to accept payment in rabbits, and a day's shooting in the season?

Is it not painful, all this? Picture the descendant of goodness knows how many barons chaffering for a penny paper, or permitting gaping yokels to pay his servants' wages. Fancy him slinking through the little town, half afraid to look the people he meets in the face, because the odds are that he owes them money. What miserable pinching and paring, what petty economy, what pinchbeck display, what alбата splendour had not this poor lord to put up with! Would it not have been better for him to go out to stern labour in a fustian jacket, bought for ready money at a slop-shop, than to roll through the streets of the little town in a chariot that he could not afford to have repainted, with a coachman and footman to whom he owed money, and wearing a coat that he had not paid for, though the tailor had dunned him for the money?

Poor fellow! it wasn't his fault that he could not work honestly instead of living this miserable life. We must remember that every rank of life has its duties, and the duty of a nobleman is to do nothing and spend money. We can scarcely wonder if, with such a difficult duty to perform, this poor nobleman grew hard, and callous, and cruel. An artificial society makes its creatures artificial—machines without hearts, without tears, without blood.

Was it strange that the noble lord was so severe with poachers when he sat on the bench at Axford? Every bird, every rabbit, that the poacher took from him represented the shillings this peer so sorely needed. They were the wares of his shop that the poacher filched, and no one is surprised when

the tradesman punishes the thief who steals his goods. Was it strange that the noble lord was so exacting about his rents, and sold up the wretched tenants who were a little behindhand with their payments? The world exacted its rent from him. He must go to town for the season, he must ask friends down into the country, he must give dinners, and subscribe to charities, and keep up appearances. These were his rent, and he had to be particular and punctual, and those who were his tenants must be the same. For cruelty and meanness of every description, there seems to me considerable excuse in this paltry false position of the descendant of blue-blood barons.

As his lordship sat among his guests in the banquet hall at Beauchet, and helped them to neck of mutton or home-fed pork, his friends could not but hear the howl of the wolves which he found it so difficult to keep from the door. But they were polite, and chose to believe that the noise came from his lordship's kennels. And if some excuse is to be made for him, how much credit is there not due to his friends! They kept up the fallacy of his nobility in this house of his, where everything that surrounded them spoke plainly of indigence, impecuniosity and ignominy.

Behind the faded tapestry half-starved rats held audible debate on the advantage of being well-born, as compared with the disadvantage of being ill-fed. Dusty suits of armour, with the strangely obtrusive air of being out at elbows, adorned the corridors, whose dim windows looked out with lack-lustre gaze on the leaf-strewn park, where so many noble elms had fallen to prop the falling fortune of the house. Grave pictures of Lacquoignes, in the costumes of all periods, from the very earliest, but all with the indubitable Lacquoigne expression, discernible in spite of the changes of dress, looked down from the walls with a melancholy kind of prescience of certain ultimate exile. A few even seemed to regard fixedly some point in their frames, as if they already saw the dreadful label, "Lot 108," affixed there.

The very plate—the ancestral plate—on the buffet in the banquetting hall had a strange look. It seemed as if it did not belong to the place, but was only paying a visit. And, indeed, when the family went to town it was packed up and travelled with them. And perhaps Mr. Attenborough could tell you that a Mr. Lacking, who was very like my lord's butler, at such times deposited with him—for safety of course, but naturally taking a little security in the shape of money—a number of massive pieces of plate, marked with the crest of an open hand, couped. And sometimes when, at the end of the season, Mr. Lacking did not get money enough to restore

Mr. Attenborough's security, the Lacquoignes did not happen to ask any friends down to stay, and the buffet at Beaudechet remained undecorated.

Darkly brooded the sombre carved oaken roofs of Beaudechet over the worn furniture and faded hangings—nay, the very walls seemed touched with grief, and mourned over the poverty of the line, breaking into blotches of unseemly moisture, as if they were weeping.

But if the furniture was worm-riddled, the carpets threadbare, the curtains moth-eaten, and chairs and tables scanty, one saw brightly stained in the pictured panes, or ostentatiously displayed on beam and portal, and in every conceivable available spot, the arms of the illustrious house of Lacquoigne—argent, over a drop of dew, a kite volant, with proper supporters; two geese, vert, billed of the first. Crest, an open hand, coupé, gules. Motto: "Droict d'aynesse, rang non richesse."

There was no doubt about it, at the time when my story begins, that the fortunes of the house were at a very low ebb indeed. The late lord, as I have said, had to do with a great many public companies. But making a fairish profit by his directorial duties, he was foolish enough to invest some of his money in a company's shares. This was almost criminally foolish, because he had been a director often enough and long enough to know better. In the end he not only lost what he had invested, but more beside, and, in fact, only kept the bailiffs out of Beaudechet by a barricade of felled timber. The present lord was suffering from this. And what was worse, he had a family of six, and had married a lady, who, though nobly born, was not at all wealthy. Each had supposed the other to be well off, and the error was not discovered till too late, when they both solemnly registered a vow that in case of anything happening to either, the survivor would not make such a mistake again. But there was no help for it. They pinched, and pared, and screwed in every possible way, and made the two ends apparently meet, maintaining all the while an outward calm such as is expected of nobility.

Two footmen waiting at table to remove a silver cover from a couple of mutton chops; a chariot and pair taking her ladyship down to a shop in Newington Causeway to buy cheap calicoes; a baron doing second gamekeeper's work, and shooting rabbits to sell them to a London poulterer—these are some of the illuminations to be drawn in the margin of the chronicles of the Lacquoignes at this period.

But at last there came a gleam of good luck. My lord is reading the *Times*, which he takes in for an hour a day from

the little newswoman round the corner. That little newswoman does not like to remind the Baron of his bill, but she says "it's a pity great folks think so little about money, or they would not leave her unpaid so long."

As he glances down the columns of the journal, his eye catches a paragraph, headed "Election Intelligence." The seat for Axeford has just been vacated, the late M.P. retiring through ill-health; and his lordship fancies the paragraph may refer to that. He looks at it with idle curiosity, for he has long ceased to care about politics, and takes no active part in the elections at Axeford—has not done so since Mr. Thorne, the Radical linendraper, succeeded in getting in a candidate, to whom his lordship was opposed.

But the paragraph is not about Axeford. It is to the effect that there has been a split among the good people of Brybemhall, and they are going to petition against the return of the sitting member, Mr. Orr, whom they accuse of corruption and other terrible charges never before dreamed of in that pure constituency.

A brilliant prospect suddenly seems to open before Lord Lacquoigne's eyes. Here is a candidate, and Axeford is a vacancy. He takes it for granted that Mr. Orr will either resign or be unseated, and he calculates on the stroke he could make by returning him for what he can easily make appear as the family seat of the Lacquoignes. Once having secured him the seat, his lordship feels that he can command the gratitude of Mr. Orr, whom he knows well by reputation, and who, he feels satisfied, can afford to throw his gratitude into a solid form.

So my lord rings the bell, and sends up word to my lady, who is dressing for dinner, that he wishes to speak to her; whereupon she tells him that she is waiting for him in her dressing-room.

"How long can the dinner wait, my lady?"

"Any time you please; but had not you better wait? What are your wishes?"

"I see Mr. Orr, the wealthy banker of Lombard Street, is likely to lose his seat for Brybemhall. There's a vacancy, as you know, at Axeford, and he is a very desirable man to start as the Lacquoigne candidate. I want to go up to town at once, and see Scrooby."

Scrooby is my lord's lawyer. My lady sees the beauty of the plan at a glance; so she steps into her room, and tells Martin, her maid, to go down and tell cook to delay the dinner. In obedience to orders, the cook refrains from cooking the three chops, and puts the pot of potatoes on the hob.

My lord takes a Hansom, and goes straight off to see Scrooby.

Scrooby is a very well-to-do lawyer, and he undertakes my lord's affairs chiefly because it enables him to keep a tin box, with the Baron's title emblazoned on it, in the consulting room. He is, among other things, a Parliamentary agent, and he knows Mr. Orr; so that matters are pretty smooth. He promises to communicate at once with Mr. Orr. He quite agrees that that gentleman is not likely to face the petition, and that Axeford will be a graceful way of getting out of it.

Why prolong the story? Mr. Scrooby points out to Mr. Orr that here is the honourable extrication from his trouble, which, truth to tell, is bothering the banker terribly.

"You can, Sir, retire in disgust, and shake the dust off your shoes at the recalcitrant borough. You are invited by a large and influential deputation to represent Axeford, which has long watched with jealous eyes your career as representative of Brybemhall."

"I shall of course be put at once on a familiar footing with Lord Lacquoigne"—the Dives of yesterday was dying to shake hands with Lord Lazarus. Dives knew my lord's poverty, but then he was of such splendid descent, and moved in such a very select circle! That select circle was Mr. Orr's aim and ambition; he had never yet been admitted to it. Money in England can buy everything but the *entrée* into those charmed rings where only the best blood circulates. Yet even this Lord Lacquoigne would have to contrive for his benefactor; and Scrooby knew he would, so he made the undertaking.

In a few days the whole affair was settled. Lord Lacquoigne went down to Axeford, and entered into communication with Mr. Payham, the chief political agent of the borough. The tradesmen, who were all interested in his lordship's good fortune, because they had, so to speak, invested largely in him, were most anxious for the return of Mr. Orr. A lengthily-signed requisition was forwarded to Lombard Street, and his lordship's creditors began to dream of being paid some day. The borough was his—he had purchased it with bad debts!

Meanwhile Mr. Orr—or somebody for him—wrote a parting address to the unworthy electors of Brybemhall. "After the suspicions which had been breathed against him he should not feel happy in retaining his seat, for he could not believe he retained their confidence. With regard to the abominable charge which malicious persons had trumped up against him, he could say, with his hand on his heart, that his dearest wish was to see the inquiry prosecuted to the utmost: and, in order

to ensure that desirable consummation, he was prepared to advance the sum requisite to open the proceedings."

You see he took things with a high hand, did Mr. Orr, and very wisely. As soon as his determination to throw up the representation of Brybemhall became known in that borough, a cloud seemed to fall upon it. The electors felt like wilful heirs who have foolishly alienated the affections of a wealthy relative. They quarrelled among themselves; and from that day forth there was no more peace or brotherly unity in Brybemhall, for each man accused his neighbour of assisting to kill the goose that laid golden eggs.

On the 5th of November, 1854, the unopposed election of Mr. Orr as M.P. for the ancient and incorruptible borough of Axeford, was declared by his Worship the Mayor, who thereby felt he had secured the settlement of his little account with Lord Lacquoigne. Every man in the crowd felt as he cheered the newly-chosen representative that he was giving a certain discount in consideration of receiving ready money shortly from Beaudechet.

As he bowed to his constituents, Mr. Orr said to himself, "Now I shall be an invited guest at his lordship's, and get into the best society. But I wonder what he expects!"

As Lord Lacquoigne rode home in the unpaid-for chariot, with the creditor groom and footman, he sank back very wearily in his seat, and said to himself, "I suppose it's all right now. I wonder how I can work him. I must open an account with him, and he must let me overdraw, for one thing. I wonder what family he has. Our girls are too young to marry: but if he has a daughter, we may get a match for Harry!"

Mr. Orr was certainly a catch for a needy lord. He had all but the one nice shade which money could not buy, and that nice shade would be filled in by a union of the families.

What was "Harry"—his lordship's son and heir—doing at the moment when his fond father cut and dried this little scheme for his happiness?

## CHAPTER X.

*"PLEASE TO REMEMBER."*

THAT the 5th of November, eighteen hundred and fifty-four, was perhaps a gloomy morning in England, where we most of us were at the time, we can all believe. That it was a very gloomy morning in a distant part of Europe, where few of us were on that day, we, everyone of us, know. And why? Because it is history. As the day struggled through a seemingly unconquerable array of dense dark clouds, so English glory, and the English courage of which it is born, broke steadily through the outnumbering masses which threatened to overwhelm them, and the page of history which should, by all rights, have been darkened with the story of our defeat, is brightly blazoned with the chronicle of our victory.

Dark and dead, dully lapt the mist about the hills around Sebastopol. In endless grey lakes it stood in the valleys. The plains were one vast sludge, with little dim dun pools of water collected here and there—dun now, but to take a more ghastly colour shortly, as that mud was by-and-by to be poached into gory ooze.

There had been dull muffled rumblings in that plain all through the night, rumblings which young soldiers listened to with awe, and believed to be the portents of a convulsion of nature, but which old soldiers recognised as warnings of coming battle. Like thieves in the darkness, the stolid Russian gunners were rolling the cannon, with wheels bound with haybands, into their position along the Woronzoff road. Those pieces of artillery were destined to take up their position on the heights just discernible in the fog, and thence sweep the encampment of the allies, while the vast flood of Russian troops poured down like a dark inundation on the plateau, and swallowed up the scattered divisions of the English and French armies.

When the daylight began to struggle dimly with the night and the mist, those fine fellows, Dick, Tom, and Harry, the outposts, who had fought so many times like Homeric heroes to drive back the reconnaissances which the enemy made so often in force upon this particular point until nearly the end of the preceding month—Dick, Tom, and Harry, I say, became aware of a certain thickness in the fog in front of them, which rapidly growing blacker and blacker, developed itself



into a line of grey-coated Russians advancing at a trot. Fighting all the way with a determined front that kept even so numerous an enemy at a respectful distance, the advanced post retired. They fell back behind the crest of the hill upon our encampment.

And no sooner was that crest abandoned by our brave fellows, going back step by step, and holding at bay so overwhelming a force, than up rolled and rattled the enemy's guns of position and field artillery, and began to pour in a great furious sheet of flame, and shot and shell, upon the scarcely awakened camp. Under a canopy of smoke that hung chokingly and immovably in the heavy fog, with the shot roaring and whistling through the tents, ploughing up the earth, our men woke out of dreams of home,—and who knows what pleasant things beside?—to stumble out, and hurry forth to what might be their first and last battle.

What a rushing to and fro of excited officers, what a scampering of scarcely dressed soldiers, what a hurrying up of horses, what mounting and galloping in haste! And over all that deadly pall of fog and smoke, that shriek of shells, that hoarse hurricane of shot!

Captain the Honourable Henry Vorian, son and heir of Lord Lacquoigne, turned out with the rest and joined his regiment, the 5th battalion of the Scots Fusiliers.

You see a cadet of that noble house could only enter the Guards. No line regiment could give sufficient scope for the splendour and chivalry of that distinguished line. But as, unfortunately, a commission in the Guards is an expensive pastime generally speaking, instead of a profitable employment, the son of the lofty but impecunious race was most unfairly situated. He was a fine fellow, and stood quite six feet in his stockings, but he was quite up to his lofty neck in debt, and had no chance of getting out of it.

You will scarcely be surprised, then, to hear that the Honourable Henry Vorian's slumber had been beset with dreams of unfortunate tradesmen. In a vision, he found himself in his quarters in London, reclining on the sofa. "Tap!" came at the door. It was a dunning, a dolorous knock, and he declined to notice it. "Rap!" yet louder; "bang!"—"crash!"—"boom!" It was the Russian battery opening on the camp.

"There they are, Sir," shouts Harry's servant, thrusting his head into the tent.

"Who?" asks the Captain, hardly awake.

"The Rooshians—the divvles, in big foorce, beded, and with moighty big guns to the fore——" and as he says it, a round shot, bowling along, cuts him in half. The bleeding

trunk falls forward into Harry Vorian's hut, and speaks more eloquently than anything else could do of the actual imminent presence of battle.

The heir of Lord Lacquoigne was a careful man at his toilet, for he was handsome and a lady killer, but he did not waste much time in beautifying now. In five minutes he joined his regiment.

By this time the battle had begun in earnest. Under the cold grey sky the masses of the enemy came rolling onward upon the front of our line.

Experienced officers say that there has never been so important and so fiercely contested a battle as Inkermann—for that, as I hope my readers have guessed, is the battle I am trying to tell them of—which was so easy to understand as this. The guns brought so stealthily along the Woronzoff road were to be placed on the ground occupied by our outposts, which were to be driven in by the onslaught of an outnumbering force of infantry—there was no play for brilliant cavalry manœuvres here. Only stern click of bayonet to bayonet, or rattling volley upon volley of small arms, hand to hand encounter, and the stern silent grapple of life for life, could decide this contest. And then when the guns had taken position on the desired ridge, a storm of iron was to be hurled on the weak point of the position, so as to shake or shatter the troops pushed forward for its defence. And when that shaking or shattering was accomplished, there remained nothing to be done but to let loose the whole immense Russian army on the level plateau, where our encampments lay, and destroy in detail the scattered corps of the allied forces.

Let us see how far the Russians succeeded in their attack.

They drove in our advanced guard. They posted their guns. They scorched up the plateau where our men were but now sleeping quietly in their tents, with what I will not clothe under the French disguise of *feu d'enfer*, but call honestly, hell-fire, because I feel sure no Englishman—or English woman—will be too squeamish to refuse the only word that can adequately express the atmosphere of death which swept over that table-land.

Under that devouring downright torrent our gathering forces—gathering at the weakest point of our line—were decimated. Ranks were mowed down—officers fell on every side, and it was a doubt, every instant, who lived to lead. And upon all this success followed a brave charge. The Russians gallantly commanded, swept up the slope, and rushed down upon our disordered, disorganised troops.

Back—back in hopeless chaos drove the all-puissant enemy,

successful in everything but defeating the men who ought to have acknowledged themselves vanquished before ever they crossed bayonets. Carrying out every detail of the scheme which was to make conquest a certainty, they nevertheless found it slipping from their hands.

What did it matter to any private in any regiment that the science of war pronounced him beaten? What was it that that devouring fire, which made such lanes through the ranks of his comrades, told him, but that he must fight for six men instead of one?

And every soldier on the heights of Inkermann did fight for six men. Out-matched, surprised, eaten out by the searching torrent of shot and shell, our gallant army held its own. Held its own! Why use so weak a word?—beat back, cut in pieces, scattered like a cloud all the outpoured bravery of Russia. And at last in a valley choked with the dead and dying, where almost every step was set upon the corpse of a brave man, after nine long hours of a fasting resistance, famished and faint—but famous until History shall shut up her book, and Glory burn her laurels—our brave men sank down to rest—victors in a dearly bought contest.

Early in the engagement, coming up in companies as they could be formed, the brigade of Guards, the picked men of England, went to the front. We who have seen them on parade, to whom they are most familiar, cannot but feel a sort of choking of breath as we see them plunge into that deadly canopy. The flower of our land, officered by the young nobility of the country—they are lost company after company, in the reeling smoke that is lighted up every instant by the lashing red-hot torrent of iron death.

There is a battery on the verge of the slope opposite The Ruins—a hasty structure of gabions and sandbags, thrown up to hold two guns, which silenced a battery on the opposite heights, and were withdrawn after doing their work. Into this battery the Guards throw themselves, for a large body of Russians is sweeping round the edge of the cliff—a dark tide creeping out with a glittering spray of bayonets—and presently to break into a long rolling volley of fire.

The battalion of Fusiliers to which the Honourable Henry Vorian is attached extends on the left of the battery. There is no fear in the lad's heart as he unsheathes his maiden sword and looks steadily at the advancing foe. He thinks of his stately mother at home, of the careworn face of his father, of old school-days and school-mates, of the pleasant park of Beaudeschet.

And then further down the line there is the click of engag-

ing bayonets. In another moment the fight has rushed up to where he is, and he is cheering on his men, and busy, cut and parry, with a youngster about his own age, who is leading the Russians.

Two lads! One would have liked to see them playing a match at billiards, or sculling for prizes, or boxing to prove best men—but crossing swords, thirsting for each other's blood. War may be very noble, and I own that when I am speaking of it in a broad way, describing the onset of army upon army, it makes my blood gallop—but when one thinks of such individual encounters it chills the healthy pulses, and makes one shudder.

There was no long contest between these two lads. Neither knew much of the art of killing. They slashed viciously, and parried vigorously, and a skilled swordsman would have finished either of them in two seconds. But a dogged, dark, beetle-browed private, in Captain Mustakof's regiment, seeing his young officer did not kill off his man at once, made a sturdy thrust at the young Englishman's breast. But before the bayonet reached him, Captain Vorian was lying flat on his back, with his eyes fixed on vacancy, and his arm shattered at the shoulder.

A spent shot bounding up the slope had bowled him over. His young enemy, almost carried forward by the weight of a ferocious cut he was making in seven, ran on the bayonet of Private McDonald, who, seeing his officer beset by odds, was coming up to support him, and plunged his weapon into the Russian officer's throat; whereupon he and the Russian private came to such close quarters, that neither could use his bayonet. So they fastened a grip and went down on the top of the two boys, trying for grim death to throttle each other.

And, to judge from their earnestness and determination, they might have gone on trying to throttle each other to this day, had not another cannon ball, coming with easy bounds up the slope, knocked them both into space.

In the meantime the Guards had fought desperately. Long after their ammunition was exhausted, when half their number were writhing on the ground with mortal wounds, or lying stark and stiff, deaf to the roar of battle around and above them, the Guards held the battery. Driven out of it for a while, they retired to the crest, and as soon as reinforced, struggled back again, and retook the position.

It was lucky for Captain the Honourable Henry Vorian of the 5th battalion of the Scots Fusilier Guards, that the Russian officer was killed over him. The Russian soldiery, enraged by defeat, brutalised by training, stimulated by vile

spirit, bayoneted the wounded English as they lay. One amiable ruffian did pin him by the leg as he rushed on into the battery, but the wound was not dangerous, and by-and-by, when the returning Guards tumbled the enemy head over heels out of the position, Captain Vorian was taken up by two privates, and carried to the rear in a blanket.

"You're lucky, old boy," said a brother officer, as he passed him. "They bayoneted poor Newman, — them!" and I trust that the imprecation was forgiven, in consideration of the hideous barbarity which called it forth.

"There's life in the old dog yet," said the cheery voice of the surgeon, as he examined Vorian's wounds.

"Have you ever been walked over with thick boots?" asked Vorian, smiling faintly as the doctor took the brandy flask from his lips.

"No, I can't say I have."

"Well, then, you don't know whether it's fatal; but, egad, it hurts me more than the smash."

After which pleasantry Captain Vorian bid the world good afternoon for a short space, but recovered anon, to find himself laid on a hospital bed, with a smart pain in the calf of his leg, and a dull aching in his shoulder. He could not help feeling that for some time at least he had seen his share of the campaign.

"How did it go?" he asked in a low voice, of an orderly who came by.

"What was it, Sir?"

"The scrimmage on the 5th."

"Beat 'em back, Sir, of course. But we have lost a lot of men."

"Have the Guards suffered much?"

"Yes, Sir. Heavy losses in the Guards. But they cut the best figure of all the regiments engaged."

"Thank God!"

With which pious ejaculation the young officer dozed off again.

And just about the time when this refreshing sleep crept over him, his father, Lord Lacquoigne, had just finished a letter, inviting Mr. and Mrs. Orr down to spend the Christmas among their constituents.

## CHAPTER XI.

## FAREWELL TO POLVREHAN.

WHEN Marian escaped from Captain Cormack, she fled to her own room, locked the door, and gave way to a hysterical flood of tears. Hitherto she had borne up against her trouble, and for the sake of her sister and of her father's memory, had endeavoured to wear an outward calm, and face boldly whatever duties were imposed upon her. But now all that fortitude was prostrated by a single blow. They were not only fatherless, but friendless and penniless, and there was nothing before them but to go out and fight their way in the great world of London.

She flung herself upon her knees beside the little white bed where she had so often lisped her innocent child's prayer, calling with imperfect speech upon God "to bless dear papa and dear mamma;" and there she sought comfort and strength at the Throne of Mercy with heart-broken sobs and choked utterance. And, if not comfort, calm was at length given to her entreaties, and she rose, and sitting on the bedside, began to look before her and try to see the way which she must choose. Alas, the choice was not a very perplexing one. Women have but few kinds of employment open to them. They had fewer, at the time of which I am writing, than they have now, and as Marian considered her prospects, there was but a narrow selection before her. A place behind the counter, needlework, and teaching, were the only three alternatives she could discover, for all her puzzling and thinking.

Of these three modes of earning a livelihood, the last seemed to poor Marian's inexperienced mind by far the most preferable. Indeed, after contemplating it for a short time, she began to picture it as rather a pleasant way of getting a living. She would not be so much removed from her original station in life as she would be when serving in a shop, nor would she be so lonely and friendless as she would be if she adopted the needle. Indeed, she looked forward to something not unlike a home in her position as a governess.

Poor girl! Ignorant of the ways of the world — of the chilly barrier which poverty raises between the governess and her employers — of the dubious position, half servant, yet hardly half companion — of the exactions, the tyrannies, and

the hardheartedness she was fated to meet with in this new career, she almost began to wish it might commence at once.

At any rate it would be better to toil for her bread than to be indebted to Henry Cormack. She would have undertaken any drudgery sooner than be beholden to his charity, and this was—so she flattered herself—by no means unpleasant work. People would not, she argued, entrust their children, the formation of their characters, and their futures to her, unless they had confidence in her and liked her. She would feel rather as if she were among friends than that she was a hired servant, for she felt that no wages could pay for such services as a conscientious governess performs. Kindness, consideration, and friendship are the recompense such a one earns.

She looked forward, too, to much happiness with the little ones who would be entrusted to her care. Oh, Marian! you forgot how children naturally object to information, and are anything but favourably disposed towards their teachers. Even children of a larger growth have the same feeling, for when an author attempts to write "with a purpose;" when he diverges from the beaten track of narrative to moralise or instruct his readers, all say, "Oh, now he's getting prosy," and skip a page or so, until they come to the stirring incidents again. It is a melancholy fact, but it is true nevertheless.

When Marian had dried her eyes and somewhat regained composure, she summoned old Nancy Vian to her aid, and disclosed to her something of what had taken place between her and Captain Cormack.

The old woman was overwhelmed with grief at the news, though it was hardly news to her, for she had long suspected Carlyon of mine-gambling. She saw so much of him in his unguarded moments, that she had gathered some knowledge of his folly, and knew, even, that he had lost heavily at times. But she had never dreamed of such hopeless ruin, such utter bankruptcy as this.

To her the position of the poor girls did not at first appear in its true colours. To have to work for a living did not seem anything very terrible to the industrious old soul. What overwhelmed her with such bitter grief was the thought that the Carlyons of Carlyon were no more. The family was extinct, and the property was passing into other hands. No ardent Cavalier ever bewailed more earnestly the downfall of the Royal House of Stuart than this poor uneducated creature bemoaned the evil end which had befallen a squireen family. Loyalty is not a virtue that resides only under silken vests

and blue ribbons of the garter, or that attaches itself exclusively to the lines of kings.

But when Nancy had spoken her coronach for the Carlyons of Carlyon, she began to consider what was to come of the girls—the daughters of the last of the long-lived race. And then she saw how desolate and unfriended they were, and remembered how hard it is to get on in the world without some kind helping hand at the start, without friendly counsel, without the support to be derived from the knowledge that eyes are fondly watching our career.

“Aw, my dear, what be ga'en to do wi' yourself and yon poor darlin' lying there, so white as the sheets and so vrail as a lily?”

“We must leave this, Nancy, and I mean to take a governess's place. We shall go to Londou, and if I can earn enough I will put Miss Alice into some cheap lodging where she might perhaps do a little needlework, or give lessons in music.”

“Lodgin's is a braave deal up to Lonnon, my dear, and a governess beant' o'erpaid, I reckon. You'll ne'er be able to do you, I'm thinking.”

“Then, if the worst comes to the worst, she must go out as nursery governess, where she won't have to look after more than one or two little children.”

“Eh, my dear, yon Cormack must just lend you a trifle to start wi——”

“Not a fathing!” said Marian, and she told the honest old servant what had passed between them.

I won't attempt to set down the diatribe which Nancy pronounced against the junior partner of the firm. However, she agreed with Marian that for the sake of the dead the wrong must be borne in silence.

“You remember, too, Nancy, that Miss Alice knows nothing about—about that bottle, the poi—the laudanum, so she must know nothing of this difference with Mr. Cormack.”

“Aw, my dear, ne'er let yon sweet girl go on thinking well of the civil-speaking, blackhearted rogue. He's sweetened his tongue fine enough, surely, when he have a-spoke to she, and there's no knowin' what might come of it. She might fall in love wi' his carneying ways and his soft deceiving voice, my dear. You'm best to tell her.”

“I shall, of course, tell her that I have reason to think he has behaved ill, and warn her against him; but it is of little consequence one way or the other, as we are going to leave here almost immediately. And it would never do to tell her how he has treated me, or she would ask why I submit to it—



and then that secret, which, please God, I will keep from her as long as I live, would have to be told to her."

"You'm right, my dear—you'm right. But take care and warn her, poor darlin', for if ever there was a smooth-tongued villain as goes about for to teal traps for young girls' affections, that man is him, I'm thinking. Lor bless you, haven't I a-seed 'un car'in on wi' Miss Alice a'most from the first minute as he came, on'y I thought as 'twas only like to be a further increase of the partnership of the firm, so I took no notice."

"We must get away from here with all the speed we can, Nancy"

"So soon as the poor dear can be moved. But where be e'e goin'?"

"To London, Nancy."

"Aw, yes, my dear, but yon's a mighty big pla'ace, I'm told—most as big's Cornwall, I reckon. I mean where 'bouts in Lonnon, my dear."

"Ah, that I can't tell."

"Harken to me, my dear, then. My sister's husband down to Penzance he have a sister up to Lonnon, and she do let lodgin's I do know, for pa'ason over to Merrimeet he lodged there when a went up vor to see the Gra'at Exhibition. I'll find out where 'tis to, and I'll write to my sister and tell her to write to she, and you can go there, and I'm bound she'll make you bra've and comf'table, my dear."

"Kind, thoughtful Nancy! always so good to me from the earliest time I can remember," said Marian, kissing the old woman's withered cheek.

So it was determined that Nancy should write and make these arrangements for the girls. And I can tell you it was not for everybody that Nancy would have undertaken the awful task of penning an epistle. A long and laborious task it was, with much smudging and many blots, and everlasting difficulties in orthography. But it was accomplished at last, and Nancy's sister, having, with almost equal difficulty, first deciphered it, and secondly, made out its meaning (two very different things), wrote a reply, giving the required address, and enclosing a missive for her sister-in-law, Mrs. Bartlett, who resided in Pratt Street, Camden Town—so the address stated—and who let lodgings for single gentlemen, but would, as Nancy's sister thought, "be glad four two let the Missis Carlynes have a rum or two verry recsnuble, and doo all she cud four them in considarashun of them abecin Cornish, and friends of hern and Nance's."

Now that their future course was decided on, Marian was

only too anxious to get away from Polvrehan. She longed for Alice's recovery, and almost worked herself into an illness too, so much did she fret at the delay.

Dr. Johns came every day to see Alice, but luckily his visits did not delay her recovery, for Nancy did not administer the physic he sent. She had no belief in the doctor, and was a culler of simples and herbalist herself, and prescribed for Alice some concoction, which if, like Dr. Johns' draughts, it did no good, was less likely to do harm than they were.

Nature, in the meantime, undertook the poor girl's cure. She was young, and though she dearly loved her father, was incapable of any very deep emotion. Her sorrow, like her affection, was demonstrative and excessive to begin with, but was not deeply enough rooted to be very lasting.

Within a few days after her father's funeral, she was able to get about again. Marian at once hastened all preparations for departure. She had arranged not to say anything to Alice until the last moment, and even then only to tell her for the present that they were going to London on business, and for change of air.

In the meantime Nancy kept Captain Cormack at bay. He called day after day to inquire, and was most anxious to see Marian. Nancy used to tell all sorts of stories:—"Miss Alice was not so well, and Miss Marian had not left her bedside all day"—or, "Miss Marian was quite knocked up, and had gone to lie down"—or "Miss Marian had a very bad headache." Sometimes she left him in the hall while she went in to inquire whether he could see Miss Marian, and came back with a fictitious message, making some excuse for Marian's not seeing him. Cormack was not surprised at Marian's declining to receive him, but he persevered, thinking he must some day or other find an opportunity, and believing that time would heal the difference between them. He never suspected Nancy of being in the plot, and used to turn away and walk towards the gate quite unconscious of the threatening gestures and silent defiance the old woman flung after his retreating figure.

The packing was proceeded with all this time very quietly and expeditiously. Marian only took a few treasures from the dear old home she was leaving: a china bowl, in which her father had been christened, her mother's workbox, and the two portraits of the dear parents she had lost, painted in miniature, and mounted in gold locket, which used to adorn the drawing-room table. These, with a few books and her stock of clothes, were all that she took. The rest was left to pay, as far as it would, the debts which her father had contracted.

Nancy next engaged the covered cart of a neighbouring farmer to take (as she alleged) her and her boxes to the cross roads to meet the coach to Plymouth.

Everything was arranged to their complete satisfaction, and it was decided that they should go by the morning mail, which would make the hour of their departure early, and so enable them to get off without any notice.

Henry Cormack made his accustomed call on the evening before they left. Nancy told him that Miss Marian was engaged just then—and added, out of sheer mischief, that if he would call the next day, about noon, Miss Marian would be glad to have a word with him. This message, you may be sure, sent him away satisfied.

"I knew she must come round in time, women always do!" said he, as he strode away in a high state of glee.

That night Marian told Alice that they were to start next day for London on business—and in the hope that change of air would benefit her health. She was not to bother about packing, Nancy would see to that.

So, early next morning, the farmer's covered spring-cart drove up to the door, and the boxes were stowed away in it, and, then, after a bitter, bitter parting between Marian and Nancy, and when the old servant had almost broken her heart at having to take a sort of secret and surreptitious farewell of Alice, the driver chirruped to his horse, and the two girls left Polvrehan for ever!

As they drove off through the misty morning they were both very silent, until they neared a turn in the road that led over the moors. From that turn, as Marian knew, they would see the last of Polvrehan. Then she could keep the secret no longer.

"Look at it, Alice, darling. Take a look at the dear, dear old home, for it is the last look we are likely to have. We are leaving it for ever," she whispered as she clasped her sister to her heart.

Alice looked at her wonderingly. But at last the truth seemed to dawn upon her.

"Leaving Polvrehan, Marian? Leaving it for ever? What do you mean?"

"Alice, my dearest child, be strong to hear what I have to say. When poor dear papa died he was a ruined man, and we are left without a penny in the world, and with hardly a friend either!"

"Oh, Marian, and I always thought we were so rich!"

"We were once, dear. But now even Polvrehan is sold, and the engine foundry—even these moors."

"But Mr. Cormack——"

"My darling, Mr. Cormack is too proud of his money, and has not, indeed, behaved well to us in this matter."

"How, Marian?"

"I cannot tell you. You must not ask. Only believe me when I say that he has deceived and wronged us."

"Oh, Marian, I can scarcely credit it—he, so kind, so gentle, so thoughtful."

"You must take my word, Alice darling, for I cannot give you proofs. But look! this is the last glimpse we shall have of the poor old home!"

They both looked their last in silence, clasped in one another's arms, and weeping bitterly. Then they turned the corner of the road, and the view was intercepted. So they leaned on one another's shoulders, and cried all the way until they came to the cross roads. There they got down, and the boxes were taken out of the cart, and on them they sat and waited for the coming of the coach.

They had not to wait long, and were soon spinning along the broad highway over the moors to Plymouth. The day was awake now, and as the four brisk nags clattered along and the guard's bugle rang out its sweetest notes the sun began to shine. Everything was looking bright and happy, and the pleasure of the brisk motion, the music and the musical beat of the horses' hoofs, would have made the journey delightful at any other time. But now they were overburdened with the sorrow of leaving home, and the world seemed cold and heartless to them.

They had eaten but little for breakfast—Marian from grief, and Alice from excitement. But now the keen morning air began to sharpen their appetites, in spite of their grief.

Thoughtful old Nancy! Just as the spring-cart was leaving the door at Polvrehan, she had brought out a little paper of pasties.

"You'll want 'em, my dears, on the road, and I've made 'em myself, and I reckon they'll do you both good. God bless you, my dears. Think of poor old Nance sometimes while you're away." With these words the good old soul had thrust the packet into Marian's hand, and signed to the driver to go on.

Now as they neared Plymouth the girls began, as I said, to feel hungry. So Marian opened the parcel, and, behold, on the top of it lay four bank notes for five pounds each. Dirty, greasy, old provincial notes they were, but they were the accumulated savings of poor old Nancy's years of service, which she had thus delicately conveyed to the daughters of her dear dead master.

## CHAPTER XII.

## LAUNCHED IN LONDON.

"COME in here, my dears. This is my own room, and I have a nice fire going, and I'm just sitting down to my bit of supper, so if you will have a bit with me we shall be able to get on capitally. You must be hungry and cold, with all that railway travelling—though for the matter of that, when I was a girl it was coach or wagon all the way, and terrible tiresome!"

So spoke good Mrs. Bartlett, who having been prepared for the arrival of the girls by Nancy, and told how to act so as to put them at ease as soon as possible, had performed the little farce of getting ready what she called "her supper" for their dinner.

A worthy, bustling, keen little woman was Mrs. Bartlett. She was an apple-faced, dark-eyed, plump widow, just the very person to let lodgings for single gentlemen. Lucky were the single gentlemen who took lodgings at Mrs. Bartlett's, for she looked after their interests as though they were her own sons. She had once had a son, this brisk, busy, good-tempered woman—a son who had gone to the bad, and who had died in a hospital. Poor woman, she kept the prodigal's portrait reverentially, and there was a lock of his hair,—golden, silken baby's hair,—in the little golden locket at her neck. She had seen her share of grief, and there was much of the dearest portion of her life buried in the green cemetery where the prodigal slept beside his father. That father had died in the cholera year—he had been a dresser at University College Hospital, in Gower Street, and it was supposed had taken the disease from a patient, while in the performance of his duty. He was taken ill in the morning, and was dead at night. One of the surgeons was smitten down at the same time, but recovered, to crawl through the rest of his life a poor, broken-down wreck. I have often wondered why there are no decorations for men who battle with disease and death. There is no Victoria Cross for the brave man who, at the peril of his own life, snatches a fellow-creature out of the grasp of a contagious disorder, before the approach of which others fly, pale and panic-stricken. Old Fourier's idea of crowning sweeps, scavengers, and others, who followed disgusting employments,

was not such a very insane project. This of mine seems to me a most proper and just measure. But I suppose it will never be more than a dream.

Mrs. Bartlett, I have told you, was a woman who had known trouble, and sorrow, and bereavement intimately, and though she was so cheerful and merry, was as near crying as anything in the world when she opened the door and let in these two poor orphans out of the night, which was drizzly and dark.

They had travelled third class to spare there scanty store of money, and their rough travelling companions had alarmed them. The roughness was not intentional rudeness; it was the mistaken good fellowship of a set of people they were not accustomed to. When honest Jack, coming up from Plymouth, where the "Glorious" was lying in the Hamoaze, saw these two girls in their new black dresses—new but not fine mourning—his rough diamond of a heart was touched, and he paid his uncouth homage to such sorrow. Rum was mother's milk to him, so when he took his little bottle from his pocket, gave the neck a ceremonious wipe with his cuff, and handed it to the girls, he meant only all that was kind. But he scared them terribly, nevertheless.

When Pat—the splendid worshipper of a woman in distress—who had made a lucky "sthroke" at the railway works, asked the two girls when he got out at Swindon, whether they wouldn't like "jist a dthrop," he intended to be genial and gentle. But they shrank from him in terror.

And when the wife of the travelling clock-maker, who was nursing her baby and darning a very ragged stocking, asked them to take one of her sandwiches—great thick slabs of heavy bread, entombing a layer of bacon—she really wished to show her womanly sympathy, and I can forgive her for putting their refusal down to a wrong motive, and talking pointedly about people "who, being stuck up, hadn't ought to ride in third-class carriages."

The reception Mrs. Bartlett gave them—"familiar but by no means vulgar"—was indeed welcome. They sat down, too weary, and worn, and terrified, to cry even. They rose from her hospitable table refreshed, reinvigorated, and quite at their ease,—even smiling. Mrs. Bartlett produced her little bottle.

"Now, my dears, just a wee drop of port wine negus, with a grate of nutmeg, to give you a nice sound sleep. Oh, you must! I don't allow anyone to be rebellious here. I know all about it, and I know you ought to. Don't shake your heads, because I'm a qualified practitioner, because poor B.

was in the medical line. You're tired, that's what you are—you needn't tell me that. And you want rest and sleep—that's what you want. You needn't tell me that. And if you don't take my dose, I know what it will be. You'll be both of you dreaming all night of falling over precipices, and waking up with a start. It's the muscles, you know, from being overworked, and unless you take this—there's just a grate of nutmeg on the top—unless you take this you'll be tumbling down and starting up all night. And that is a thing I can't have, and won't allow."

Running on in this strain, Mrs. Bartlett had made two steaming hot glasses of port wine negus, and had talked the girls into taking them. Then she led them up to their rooms—very modest apartments, on the second floor—where everything looked "as clean and nice as a new pin," to use the worthy woman's own brilliant simile.

She saw them comfortably in bed, and invited them to breakfast with her the next morning. "She had not been able to make any regular provision for them, so they must come down and breakfast with her;" which they smilingly and gratefully promised to do. Whereupon she made bold to kiss them both, and bade them good-night.

Whether it were Mrs. Bartlett's prescription or only the weariness of the long journey, I cannot tell, but the sisters were soon too sound asleep even to dream of dear old Polvrehan, now standing white and deserted in the moonlight in that distant valley, where the owls were complaining at intervals, and the dogs baying the flitting shadows with such melancholy long-drawn howls.

The unaccustomed bustle of so quiet a street even as Pratt Street woke the girls betimes, and they were down to breakfast early. They found Mrs. Bartlett up—she had evidently risen with the lark—though whether you could have found a lark within five miles or more of Pratt Street, I cannot say.

"Come, come, this is capital! I did not expect you down for some hours yet. Not that I like to see people lying late, but there would have been an excuse for you. You'll be sure to get on if you are good at getting up, my dears; as B. used to say—

'Early to bed, and early to rise.'

That's my motto, dears. Why, do you know that I can show you as clear as day that by my getting up early I have been able to save up money enough in the Bank to almost buy one of those boarding-houses, or private hotels, in Duke

Street, St. James's; and if I can only do that my fortune's made."

The possession of a lodging-house on a large scale in the locality she mentioned was the one great ambition of this capital little woman's lifetime. And by hard work, honesty and diligence—not by idleness, petty larceny, and carelessness, as is too often the case with lodging-house keepers—she had by this time accumulated a little sum at the St. Martin's Lane Bank, with which she intended to buy the long-desired realisation of her visions.

She gave the girls a very good substantial breakfast, which they relished immensely. Change of air and scene already began to exercise its influence; and removed from painful associations, they could shake off their depression, and become almost cheerful.

In the afternoon Marian set out to look for an engagement. She visited several agents, and paid some of them money in advance for their assistance, which of course, under such circumstances, they did not greatly trouble themselves to give her.

She lost herself over and over again, and had to inquire her way frequently. As a natural result, she returned home wearied out and disheartened.

When Mrs. Bartlett found out what her errand had been, she said she was not much astonished at her want of success.

"Bless me, why didn't you tell me? The best plan is to look in the paper. Just ring the bell for me, there's a dear. Thank you. Yes, of course, you should look in the papers. Mary, just step up and ask the first floor if he will be kind enough to lend me the loan of the *Times* supplement just for half a second. When we get that, my dear, I shall be able to show you where to look."

The paper was brought, and Mrs. Bartlett pointed out to Marian where to look for the advertisements for Governesses.

They found several; some requiring answers by post, others requesting candidates to apply at some library or news-agents; but all offering a salary the smallness of which surprised poor Marian. And she said as much to Mrs. Bartlett.

"Bless you, my dear, they're just about the usual figure. It's dreadful poor pay is governessing. What do you want—'Resident,' or 'Daily'? I should say 'Resident,' if you ask me. You get your meals regular, and you have a roof over you; whereas 'Daily' means wet or fine, hot or cold, any distance, punctuality indispensable, and you must find yourself. Take my advice, dear, and if you must be a governess—which is curious to me, considering that there



are confectioners' shops, baby linen, and bonnets, or taking in needlework—be a 'Resident.' But you won't get more than about thirty to begin with. Why, lor, in some places, mostly schools, they don't even give that. It is 'in return for the advantages of a comfortable home,' or some nonsense of that sort."

This was not very inspiring. But Marian did her best to believe that Mrs. Bartlett was prejudiced and in error.

She selected several advertisements, answering some by letter, and sallying out next day in order to apply personally in other cases. She met with much chilling discouragement, and no little rudeness. But she persevered.

She was bandied about from shop to private residence—from one place to another; she was examined in her proficiency by ignorant people. But she persevered.

She was rudely treated by tradespeople, who did not like to be bored by their customers' governesses. She was scornfully entertained by powdered footmen at great houses; and looked down upon and snubbed by grand ladies. But she persevered.

Night after night she came back from her travels, weary, faint, and disheartened. But the good Samaritan, by name Bartlett, who resided at Number 175, Pratt Street, Camden Town, bound her wounds, pouring in oil, and carefully tended and encouraged her.

At last one day Marian came upon the following announcement:—

**R**ESIDENT GOVERNESS.—WANTED, in a Gentleman's Family, a Lady, not over 30 years of age, as GOVERNESS, to take the entire charge of two young Children, and instruct them in English, French, and Music. She must be a member of the Church of England, cut out and make Children's Clothes, and wash and dress them. Salary, £30, and all found.—Apply, etc., etc.

Here, it appeared to Marian, was another chance. She was growing almost sick of "Applying, etc., etc." However, she went to the address indicated, and was at once referred to the residence of Mr. Orr, M.P., in Grosvenor Place.

She found the yellow chariot at the door, waiting to take Mrs. Orr to her dressmaker's, to see all the latest fashions just brought over from Paris. When the she-millionaire found out what Marian's errand was, she directed one of the brilliant canary-coloured footmen who were standing round watching their mistress's departure, "to take the young woman to the housekeeper's room, and let her wait."

So Marian waited for a couple of hours or so, when Mrs. Orr returned, and summoned the candidate for the splendid salary to her presence.

"I have come, Madam, in answer to an advertisement in the *Times*——"

"Oh, you're a governess, are you?" says Mrs. Orr, examining the poor girl through a pair of massively mounted eyeglasses. "What recommendations have you got? Why did you leave your last place?"

Marian explained that she was only commencing her career as a governess.

"Oh, we must deduct that from your wages. How old are you?"

Marian told her.

"That's a little too young. I don't think you can expect the whole thirty pounds, even supposing you suit. Are you good at your needle?"

"Yes, Madam."

"And you can teach French, eh? Give us an example, come! Say, 'How are you?' in French."

Marian obeyed.

"Yes, that's not bad. Do you know German?"

"The rudiments. But that is not mentioned in the advertisement. I can teach drawing to beginners, and arithmetic: but these were not included in the advertisement."

"Oh, of course one can't put everything one wants into half a dozen lines. But they should have been understood where thirty pounds was offered."

Marian said she was prepared to teach them for the thirty pounds; but not if the reduction Mrs. Orr proposed to make were carried out.

The bargain was struck, and Marian went home to Pratt Street, pleased at having procured employment, but far from delighted with the mistress under whom she was to serve.

Alice was in dire distress at the notion of losing Marian. She must go out too, she vowed, and they might perhaps be near each other, and see each other often. She should be wretched by herself in London, she protested.

Mrs. Bartlett too was very sorry to part with Marian. She opposed the idea of Alice's going out as a governess; but the spoilt child did not submit to crossing with a good grace, so it was decided that she should advertise for a situation. Accordingly Marian and she laid their heads together to produce the following notice:—

**W**ANTED, a SITUATION as Nursery Governess, in a Gentleman's Family, by a Young Lady, who possesses all the elegant accomplishments. Terms not of such consequence as a comfortable home.—Apply (prepaid), A. C., Brooksby's Library, Pratt Street, Camden Town, N.W.

Answers came in pretty readily, but most of them came from the provinces, which was not what Alice wished. The letters were great curiosities. Here a woman, who could not afford to pay, offered half of one of her children's beds as a recompense "for services in educating three little girls." There a lady, whose education had been neglected, offered "the use of a small bed-room and meals" in return for the acquisition of reading, writing, and arithmetic. In one or two instances the letters were evidently from men, and a few of these were masked proposals of a character that made Mrs. Bartlett bang the table with her plump fist, and vow all men were villains.

At length, however, a missive arrived with a splendid coronet on the seal, and a crest representing an open hand. It was dated Beauchet, and ran as follows:—

"Lady Lacquigne having met with A. C.'s advertisement in the columns of to-day's *Times*, will be obliged by that person's calling at her residence in Hertford-street, Mayfair, on or after the 12th instant, not earlier than twelve."

"A lady of title, Mrs. Bartlett! Think of that! Oh, won't Marian be delighted? I must write to her at once."

"Don't you be in too great a hurry to jump for joy, my dear. I've heard of her ladyship, and unless I am very much mistaken she's a stinger."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE BURIAL OF MARIAN CARLYON—THE BIRTH OF MARIAN CARLYLE.

THERE fell upon Marian, as she crossed the threshold of Mr. Orr's mansion, a prophetic chill and gloom. She seemed at once to understand her position, and felt as if she had been a governess all her life.

The splendid canary-coloured footmen inspected her and her slender luggage with a shade less interest, but not a shade more civility, than they would have bestowed on a newly-arrived under-housemaid. They summoned the page, and ordered him to take her boxes up by the back staircase, and they told her to follow him to the housekeeper's room there to await Mrs. Orr's orders.

The housekeeper was a cold, hard, angular woman. She had been selected, as one would select a screw, for her hardness and inflexibility, for she was, in fact, a screw applied by Mrs. Orr to keep down the expenses of the establishment. She doled out the tea and sugar to the servants every week. (Mr. Orr purchased those articles at wholesale prices, and found it profitable to supply his servants instead of paying them higher wages, and allowing them "to find themselves," as the domestic phrase has it.) She kept the key of the very small beer—which she dribbled out as prudently as if it had been aqua d'oro—whereby Mr. Orr saved considerably on the two shillings and eighteen pences he would otherwise have had to pay weekly to his men and maid-servants. She made up the half-pounds of butter for the kitchen, and there, too, Mr. Orr profited, though Mrs. Pincher would have suffered penalties and pains had the Inspector of Weights and Measures ever ascended to her little dark room, which the upper housemaid, who was a devoted reader of the *London Journal* and other thrilling periodicals, had christened the Torture Chamber.

And a Torture Chamber it was! There every sixpence was sweated, and every shilling stretched on the rack until it went twice as far as one ordinarily expects of a coin of that denomination. There wages were crushed as in the iron boot, and expenditure squeezed as in the thumbscrew.

It was a Torture Chamber, too, for the servants who came to seek places, or who were to be discharged. Mrs. Pincher was

a sort of female Legree, and delighted to inflict pain on her inferiors.

It was a Torture Chamber, too, for the tradespeople who desired the custom of the house. Mrs. Pincher was naturally not disinclined to exercise her powers of extortion on her own account as well as for her employers, and the percentage she wrung from butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker would have set his Grace the Duke of Sutherland's hair so violently on end as to lift off his fire-helmet.

Mrs. Pincher was not calculated to improve poor Marian's spirits. She sat in a very straight-backed chair, which seemed especially designed to prevent her ever closing her eyes to her master's interest, and she was employed in totting up her book of household expenses. She did not rise or even lift her eyes as the governess entered, but waved her to a chair with one hand, allowing a fragment of her calculation to become audible—"and six is seventeen and eight"—as if in explanation of her absorption.

When she had arrived at the end of the sum she closed the book with a sort of snap as if it were a pair of shears, and turned to Marian.

"You're the new governess, I suppose. My name is Pincher, and I'm housekeeper. I shall be happy to let you sit here at any time. What's your name?"

"My name is Marian Carlyle," answered Marian, who had determined to exchange the dear name of the old family for something less singular.

"Oh, Miss Carlyle," said the housekeeper, as if rehearsing the sound with a view to getting as much hardness and roughness into it as possible, "you'll find the children stubborn, rather, I think," she added.

"I always get on well with children."

"Have you seen these?"

"Not yet. I suppose they are gone to bed?"

"Yes, thank goodness. I'm very glad you are come, because you'll keep them in the nursery."

"You don't care about children?"

"I can't say I do."

"You have no family of your own, perhaps, Mrs. Pincher?"

"No! I was fool enough to marry, but thank my stars, I was not such a fool as to have a family, though it would have served me right."

"You do not seem more favourably disposed towards husbands than children," said Marian, smiling, and trying to keep up a cheerful conversation.

"I'll tell you what, young lady," said Mrs. Pincher, turning

round sharply from a cupboard, where she was locking up the grocery, "men are a thorough bad lot. You marry 'em because you think they'll give you a home and earn you money; and what do they do? What did Pincher do, which was a butler in a first-rate family? Why, as soon as he'd took a house for me and furnished it, he says, 'Let lodgings.' And I did, though a dreadful life it was, owing to the constant suspicions of lodgers, who always think you are robbing 'em. But that wasn't all! What must my gentleman do but quarrel with his master almost immediate, and then I have him on my hands. And, bless you, he wasn't in a hurry to get another place—not he! Stop at home, if you please, was his notion, and so I had to support him, going out and spending money without end along with a lot of servants out of place, and such low companions."

Having relieved her mind in this way, Mrs. Pincher sat down and began to measure out the servants' allowance of tea and sugar. And she gave Mr. Funnle, the butler, very short measure indeed, as if to revenge upon the race of butlers the wrongs of the late but not lamented Pincher.

Marian watched her mournfully, and felt depressed. There seemed to be an unwholesome atmosphere in the house, which choked the belief in things good and noble.

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Pincher in a minute or two, returning to the charge, and letting fly right and left at matrimony, "yes, that's husbands all over. Take my advice, don't marry, Miss Carlyle—though for that part I'm thinking governesses don't often marry, Miss, for men look for money or something as good. I had a fourth share in a boiled beef business when Pincher took me, but he squandered that in no time, bless you!"

"He appears to have been a little extravagant," said Marian, for the sake of saying something, Mrs. P. having paused a moment, either from lack of breath, or excess of indignation.

"Extravagant! That he was to the day of his death—the very day of his death. Would you believe it? he went and died down in the country, and I had to pay for the bringing of him up to town, where we had a family vault—and the railway actually charged twice as much as if he'd been a live passenger. But there, I could forgive him a good deal, just for getting out of my way so convenient, if it wasn't that he had the impudence to leave legacies to some of his family. Actually left 'em thirty pounds altogether, which was my lawful earnings, being scraped out of the lodgings, and in the bank. There, I was wild about that, and I wouldn't have paid it, only the lawyer said as his family could get it by law."

At this moment one of the canary-coloured came in, evidently under protest, to say that Mrs. Orr wished to see Miss Carlyle in the nursery.

Thither, accordingly, Marian mounted, after bidding Mrs. Pincher good-night. Mrs. Orr was waiting for her at the door with an impatient expression, as if she had been kept waiting, which was a fact, the canary-coloured not having elected to hurry on so pitiful an errand, and having devoted a few minutes in Mr. Orr's dressing-room to the arrangement of his dress before the cheval glass, and the study of his back parting with the aid of a hand-mirror.

Mrs. Orr was out of temper, and it made her, if possible, even more unprepossessing than usual. A fat, "fussy" woman, with her great bare arms flashing with jewellery, and gold chain enough to moor the whole Prussian fleet, lying in coils on her coarse neck, with a dress worth thirty shillings a yard (a rich plum-coloured velvet), bestuck with brooches, and with all the trimmings in bad taste and all the colours about her out of harmony—is not improved by becoming a motly red in the face, and assuming the gobble of an enraged turkey cock.

"This won't do, Miss Carlyle. I have visitors to attend to in the drawing-room, and you keep me waiting like this!"

"I was not aware, Madam, and am very sorry. I came the moment I was told you wished to see me."

"Miss Carlyle, you'll excuse me, but I am mistress in this house. I have been waiting for you, and I choose to speak of it. I expect not to be answered or contradicted."

Marian could only bow her head and submit with a swelling heart to the tyranny of this reception.

"This is the room where you'll sit. Your bed-room is on the next floor, between the children's rooms. I hope you're a light sleeper—at any rate the sooner you learn the better, because Alicia is liable to sudden wakings, and wants plenty of attention. My maid will dress the children to-morrow, to show you how I like it done: after that you must do your own work. With regard to lessons, I don't interfere. Honoria, my eldest girl, who is extremely accomplished, will examine your pupils now and then, and see if you are getting them on. I shall expect the best report, remember, Miss Carlyle."

"I will use my utmost endeavour to deserve it, Madam."

Mrs. Orr did not answer, but looked very hard at her, as if in doubt whether some covert insult were intended. It was one of the characteristics of Mrs. Orr's ignorant vulgarity that it was as sensitive as a wood-louse. The slightest touch made it coil up. She was always suspicious of slight and insult. "Do

you know who I am? Am I mistress in this house? Am I not Mrs. Orr?" were questions constantly on her lips. She was perpetually discovering in the most ingenious and surprising manner all sorts of covert sneers in the merest commonplace remarks. It was the consciousness of her vulgarity that made her as uncomfortable a companion as a hedgehog. Her life was an endless effort to appear at ease in the society in which she had to move. "That *dear* Mrs. Orr," the fashionables said audibly to those around them, "the most charming creature—such a delightful woman"—and then they would put up their gold eye-glasses and look at her, smiling and nodding love to her. And inwardly—for Mr. Orr was too important a person for them to venture to trust one another to make quiet asides—each of the fashionables was thinking what a fat, frowsy publican's wife she looked. And each knew the other was thinking the same thing, and Mrs. Orr knew that they knew and thought as they did. No wonder she was disagreeable.

She failed to find any concealed sarcasm in Marian's remark, but that merely made her the more certain, in her self-doubt and self-knowledge, that the sneer was there, only it was very cleverly hidden. So she "took it out" in another way.

I must ask to be pardoned that figure about "taking it out." It always seems to me a happy phrase for such a commercial nation as we are. It treats human life after the plan of book-keeping. Some parents send their children to school and pay for their education not in hard cash, but the particular wares they deal in—Greek and Latin being exchangeable for beef and mutton—French and modern languages equivalent to rice and tea and sugar—and mathematics and maps barterable for rolls and cottage-loaves. In just this way we establish a standard of relative value quite as startling, and make as arbitrary a tariff of grievances and vengeance. How much geography would you expect to get for a quartern loaf? With how much abuse to common friends would you repay Jones's slight? He was walking with Lord Looby, and if he had bowed to you, would have given you a certain sort of investment in that nobleman. But he didn't, so you "take it out" by telling Tittle and Tattle, and goodness knows how many more kind friends, that Jones was expelled from school for stealing a pencil-case. This is a fine commercial transaction. You "take it out."

Mrs. Orr was a woman of business. She had entered her debt for the undiscovered insult, and she took an early opportunity of letting Marian have a little on account.

"There's nothing for you to do to-night, Miss Carlyle, so



you must stop here idle ; but I shall expect you to make up for the evening's holiday to-morrow. I'll send you a candle. Mind you don't set anything on fire ; and I expect you to go to bed at ten, unless at any time Honoria requires your assistance."

With that Mrs. Orr swept down stairs and returned to her guests, and very carefully omitted to tell one of the footmen that a candle was to be taken into the nursery until she had left Marian to her meditations in the dark for nearly an hour.

The nursery was a cold bare room, with no indications of its consecration to childhood. Any memento of the little ones in the shape of a broken toy would have made the place less lonely. But the little ones were pictures in little of their respected parents. All the wild, irregular beauties of childhood had been trimmed into formal yew-trees of propriety. The Orrs were stunted into ill-tempered old people, who hoarded their toys, and played at morning-calls in a solemn manner, and hectoring over the servants. They stuck no pictures on the nursery walls ; they littered no childish treasures about the floor ; they left no echoes of silver laughter in that darkening chamber. A parallelogram of light flung up on the ceiling by the gas lamp below the window was all that Marian had to cheer the gloom. She heard horses, standing in carriages at the door, champing their bits fretfully, and jingling their harness as if it were fetters. She felt a prisoner.

She groped her way to the window and looked out. It was very desolate ! A red blur on the sky from the acres of flaring gas blotted out the stars who would have seemed like old friends. A continuous roar and deep growl, as if the City were a huge beast that made night hideous, were kept up by the wheels, and the hoofs, and the many feet hurrying along on all sorts of errands—but none on an errand of kindness or mercy for this poor woman.

Fortunately, Marian had been gifted with a stout heart and a noble spirit. She would not shrink from a duty—she would not try to avoid a necessary pain. She was one of those who, having to lose a limb, would decline to take chloroform ; and I must confess that I admire such foolish bravery, if you like to call it so, as I am afraid many will. She sat in that gloomy room, tearless, by the death-bed of her former self. She recalled the sweet, peaceful days of childhood, and the golden dreams of youth, and she placed them in the casket of memory, closed it, and laid it on the breast of the dead. Then and there, in the thick darkness, she laid Marian Carlyon in her grave, and there was no other mourner at the burial beside Marian Carlyle, and her eyes were dry.

From this moment, so she said to herself, there is an end to the Cornish girl, whose father was rich and whose life was pleasant and sunny. Henceforth lives Marian Carlyle the born dependant, the servant who must earn her wages bitterly, and bow to the will of her employers; who must bear undeserved blame in silence, and not expect a word of praise however well merited.

In truth, Marian Carlyle was another being. The instinctive knowledge of what her servitude would be—the impression which I have said was created by her first step over the threshold of Mr. Orr's splendid unhomely mansion, seemed to be a new birth.

But we, I fancy, my reader, have even in our earliest days some gleams of the recollection of a previous state of being. Those mysterious memories of pre-existence, which puzzle our mature intellects as they bewildered our young minds, are things we all know. Newly-born Marian Carlyle had, no doubt, some such glimpses of a past, and among them you may be sure came the figure of a true honest lad to whom she was indebted for an understanding of the nobility of labour, of the beauty of energy, of the unspeakable delight of duties performed. If she had no such remembrance, why did she clasp her hands suddenly and say with a long sigh, "Even he would respect me once more if he could see how I shall bear all this."

There was also another memory which survived the dead Marian Carlyon. It was the thought of Alice, and the possibility of her having to suffer in this terrible way, which unsealed the fountain of tears in the heart of poor Marian Carlyle, the governess, and gave her relief at last. If affection has its bitters, how exquisite are its sweets! If it fills our breasts with pain, what infinite comfort there is in its power to reach the heart, and thaw the frozen source of tears!

## CHAPTER XIV.

## HIDDEN IN A FLOWER.

THE small black servant girl tapped at James Trefusis's door. He was back again at the little cottage near Woolwich, still working hard at the great gun that was to be. A very delicate experiment in connection with the improvement of gunpowder was in course of action just as the grimy domestic knocked.

"Come in!" It was an angry invitation; but the poor little wretch was not accustomed to much kindness, so she did come in.

"Please, Sir, a gent'man wishes to speak with you."

"Oh, bother! Ask him into the front parlour——"

"Oh, bother," broke in the visitor, who had followed the girl up stairs; "go into the parlour yourself."

"Charlie Crawhall! Why, what the deuce brings you here? Is the colour-harmonicon out, or what has happened to fetch you out?"

"The colour-harmonicon will appear simultaneously with the Trefusis gun in the Great Exhibition of nineteen hundred and nothing. But in the meantime I have just come down to pick up a few tunes."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, come along into Greenwich Park, and don't ask any questions."

"I can't go out yet. I must wait until——"

"Until all the beauty of the day is gone. And why? In order that you may half-poison yourself with the fumes of some beastly compound of 'villainous saltpetre' with other noxious drugs. Look you here, James, the philosopher—I am strong and excitable. The smell of chemicals has a powerful effect on me. I feel it working; and if you don't take me out into the fresh air in five minutes, I may do you a mischief."

"What a donkey you are, Charlie."

"Take me to my thistle, then! I know a bank whereon the *Carduus Benedictus* grows; it is on the further side of One Tree Hill. Let us go and lean our pensive brows upon—or have our pensive browse upon it, as Ryder would say."

"Well, I suppose you won't let me do anything if I stop here."

"You may swear that."

"Then I suppose I must e'en go."

"I believe you, my boy, as Shakespeare has it."

"You know that Shakespeare hasn't it."

"Well, then, say 'the poet'—that's safe enough. But it's my belief that the line is by the author of

'And sorry wag cry hem when he should grone.'

It is very much in his style."

"I don't know anything about Shakespeare, Charlie, as you are aware. If it were a question in mechanics, I might lay down the law. But I know that isn't his; and you had better not chaff me, or I'll tie you to the mouth of one of these guns and blow you away."

"James, you are trifling. Get your hat and come out."

So James Trefusis put on his hat, and he and Charlie Crawhall went for a walk. They wandered into Greenwich Park, and finally threw themselves on the grass in a retired nook under some trees, where there were no one-legged pensioners to pester them with telescopes, and only a few gnats to make a noise instead of the romping children.

Charlie Crawhall lit his brown lustrous meerschaum, the companion of his travel and partner of his toil. A pleasant fragrance speedily rose from the glowing bowl to mingle with the perfumes of the early summer.

It was a lovely day in the early summer—one of those days when it is hot enough to make you desire to be quiet, but not hot enough to make you feel uncomfortably baked if you keep still. The trees were in young fresh green leaf as yet, and the turf was studded with buttercups and daisies.

"Isn't this delightful, Jim?" asks Charlie, who is lying on his back with his arms flung up under his head, his knees drawn up, and his wide-awake thrust down over his nose.

"Yes, it's splendid!" answers the other, who is lying on his face toying with the grass and flowers, leaning on his elbows, and kicking his heels up.

"Doesn't one enjoy Nature more intensely for having been shut up among bricks, eh? I know I do. But you're just like the rest of the world. Here you are within easy distance of this lap of Nature, but you prefer being dry-nursed in a laboratory. You never come here, do you? Confess!"

"Well, I haven't, and that's a fact. But you see I am busy, for one thing, and I hate solitary walks for another."

"Doesn't Uncle Toby walk? Or is his sciatica still so bad that he can only hobble to Trim's sentry-box?" James's irreverent friends had got into the habit of speaking of the

old artillery officer as Uncle Toby, while they described James's modest lodgings as the corporal's sentry-box.

"He doesn't stir out much; but of late less than ever, for he is getting blind, poor old gentleman."

"I'm afraid if he has neglected visiting this lovely Nature here which offers itself so freely, Jim, that the blindness must be of long standing."

"Bless you, if he did come, he would only be thinking how long a range he could lay down here, or how a battery would do mounted there to protect the river. His whole life is devoted to his ambition."

"You're getting very nearly as bad, Jim."

"Enthusiasm is catching."

"By Jove, I wish the complaint was epidemic!"

"Well, I don't know, Charlie. If we were all to be going at high-pressure, the increased velocity might send the world off the rails and conduce to a general smash. I should like to invent my gun before that event."

"That only shows what a muff you are! Nothing in this world is worth the having; it is the pursuit of it that constitutes happiness. The charm of blowing soap bubbles, which is a favourite amusement of mine, is to be found, if you analyse the matter, in the delightful way in which the bubbles break at the very moment when you run them down. If they survived the first touch—if you could keep them an instant—the joy would perish. A nice prismatic-hued bubble is just the ideal world for a man to try and conquer."

"You feel deeply on the subject. Shall I fetch you a pipe and some suds here?"

"None of your impudence! But I do enjoy a game at bubbles sometimes with a small nephew of mine, who thinks Uncle Charles is so kind. I'm not; I'm only feeding my ambition."

"Do you seriously believe pursuit is better than possession?"

"On my soul, I do. Which do you think are the happiest men, the great men who succeed or the great men who don't succeed?"

"I can't tell. I don't quite understand."

"I'm looking up into the sky, Jim, which is just now of the most intensely lovely blue. If I had my colours here, I should work away to get that particular tint, and the lovely colour of the clouds and the tree-tops against it. While I was feeling my way to it through infinite combinations and harmonies, I should be revelling in the enjoyment. But when I had reached it, there would be nothing more to do but stick the sketch into my portfolio, and walk on."

"Yes, but the triumph of achieving it!"

"And the doubt that your success may be only an accident; and that you could not repeat it. No, Jim; there's nothing in this world like not getting what you want, to make you happy. Doesn't a child go and flatten his nose joyfully day after day against the toy-shop window, until some injudicious friend goes in and buys the thing he has coveted so long? And then the child takes it home and smashes it, incontinent."

"But we are not all children. Some of us have noble dreams that would have noble realisations."

"Not so noble as the dreams. Do you know, Jim, that I think Dante might have improved his Paradise by a description of the Elysium of Intellect, and it should consist of a splendid hall hung with the pictures that were never painted, stored with the books that were never written, the songs that were never set down, the dramas that were never acted, the music that was never played. I should contribute largely to the picture gallery. I have such scores of designs that will never be sketched, but would, if I could only carry them out as I see them, be the wonders of the world!"

"I'm afraid my poor gun will form a trophy in your gallery."

"So much the better for you. The great men who succeed are only admired and respected. The great men who fail are loved and pitied. Failure is often the best kind of success, as the French philosopher might put it. Besides, what is the object *you* strive after? The better destruction of your species. Is the invention of an implement of war, of a means of death and devastation, a jolly thing to reap laurels from?"

"That's nonsense, Charlie. In the first place, what interests me in the gun is the scientific part of the question. It is the accuracy that will plant a shot in a target that I think of. But in the next place, don't you think that the more terrible and true you make the machines of war the less war there will be? If you could establish it as an indisputable fact that in every battle three-fourths of the soldiers engaged must be either killed or seriously wounded, you may depend you would find nations less ready to go to war."

"Well, perhaps there is something in what you say, but that does not interfere with my original proposition, that you will be infinitely happier in your efforts to perfect your plan than you would be if you made the discovery this very moment."

"What a jolly little flower!" broke in James, still lying face-downward on the grass. "What is it, Charlie, do you know?"

He had picked a little yellow, trumpet-shaped flower, that was growing within reach. After looking at it, he tossed it to Crawhall, who also inspected it.

"I'm no botanist, Jim, and can't say. I don't know that I ever noticed one before. But I'm botanist enough for one thing, and I'll give you the advantage of my knowledge. A lecture with illustrations about to commence."

He pulled the little yellow tube out of the green sheath, and sucked the end.

"All tubiform blossoms, my young friend," he said gravely, "are distinguished by the possession of an accumulation of honey or nectar at the base. This honey or nectar, you will observe, may be extracted by suction. There! Now the lecture is at an end."

"Very curious and interesting. Are there any more specimens of the plant about, I wonder?" asked James, searching for another yellow flower. He was a long time before he found one, and was obliged to rise in order to gather it, as it was out of reach as he lay. When he had followed Crawhall's example, he flung the tube away.

"Well, I don't think much of your nectar!" he said.

"There you are! An instance in point. Why didn't you always go on contentedly seeking for yellow flowers? But no, you must needs find one, and then fruition is, as usual, followed by disgust."

James laughed.

"Of what value is this, now?" said Charlie, picking up his discarded blossom, and throwing it to James.

"None in the world," said the latter, picking it up carelessly. He began picking it to pieces, twisting it, and finally laying it in the palm of one hand, he brought the other down upon it smartly. The little tube split from end to end with a faint squeak.

He was on the point of flinging away the remains of the poor little flower, but suddenly arrested his hand, with an exclamation of surprise. He looked at it closely. It was wonderful! He could hardly believe his eyes!

Here in this tiny plant was hidden the secret for which he had been striving so long. The convolutions in the interior of the tube were the very design that had haunted his dreams and perplexed his waking hours.

The gun was invented.

"By Jove, here's the cannon, Charlie!" he exclaimed, as soon as he had a little mastered his astonishment. "Here!" and he handed him the bruised flower.

"Ah, rifled by the bees, as the poet would say. Not bad for

you, James—but I think Nature is getting into your head. Your conduct is so odd that I must set it down to intoxication, produced by imbibing too much sun and air."

"Hi! stop! don't be a donkey! don't throw it away! It is the gun, Charlie, I'm not joking or drunk. Look here, I'll show you." And James sat down beside the artist, and pointed out the merits of the screw and the advantages of the particular convolutions, and a host of minute details.

"You've found it, then. You unhappy man."

James sighed, for he remembered now that he had reached the goal, that there was no longer for him the satisfaction that one woman looked upon his success with sympathy.

"What's that for, Jim?"

"For weariness."

"For love, I think. Has Uncle Toby got a niece? or is your landlady's daughter fair to see? I always set you down as a domestic bird, not a born Bohemian. We shall have to make out your passport before long, I'm afraid. Come, tell us, Jim, is it Uncle Toby's niece? or is there a pretty barmaid at the Horse Artilleryman, at the end of your row?"

"Don't, Charlie; there's a good boy."

And there was such unmistakable pain in the tone of his voice, that Crawlhall caught his hand and pressed it.

"I beg your pardon, Jim. I didn't know!"

"All right, old boy—of course you didn't. But come, let's go and break the news to Uncle Toby."

They walked home in silence. Charlie felt he had wounded his friend's feelings unintentionally, and he saw that he was lost in a reverie of the past. He saw that the recollection was a bitter one, and that James was obliged to acknowledge the truth of his philosophy. For it was evident that the brightness was gone out of the success, and the excitement of the pursuit was lost.

When they reached the old captain's cottage, Charlie with great delicacy declined to go in with James, and went on to the latter's lodgings.

The old soldier was smoking his little black pipe—the blue smoke curling up through his thick gray moustache—and reading a work on gunnery. James laid the little flower, which he had carried home carefully in an envelope, on the book.

"Do you know that flower?"

"Yes, of course; we used to call them 'Puck's Bugles' when I was a lad. I don't know the scientific name. But why do you ask?"

"Because that is the design for our rifled cannon."



James bent over the back of the chair and carefully indicated the portions of the flower which suggested the various parts of the bore. The old man followed his description closely. When it was finished he jumped up, took James by the hand, and shook it warmly.

"Egad, we have got at the beginning of it at last. Now we shall go in and win. Sit down; we must have a pipe and a tumbler of grog over this."

James explained that he had a friend waiting at his lodgings.

"Bring him in," said the captain, "we'll have a jolly night of it. We don't find out new methods of rifling guns every day, Trefusis."

So Charlie Crawhall was fetched in, and there was a mighty brew of punch, and the captain produced some choice Virginia. There was soon a richly perfumed cloud in the little room, and the old soldier and the artist got into a brisk conversation,—met upon some subject in which both took an interest, and talked away in style.

Poor James Trefusis sat silent. He had lost the excitement of pursuit, and was thinking of that former invention of his that ended so dismally, and of the words which met him on his return—words spoken by the lips from which he had dreamed of hearing encouragement and comfort.

"Where was she now? What was she doing?" These were the questions he asked himself, for he had no friends or acquaintance in Cornwall who could tell him what had happened there.

As he sat by the window in the dusky room, lit up only by the red fire in the bowls of the smokers' pipes, which glowed very bright sometimes as the talkers waxed warm in discussion, James Trefusis looked towards the west and saw a star glimmering out over the dying sunset gold. Far away he pictured to himself the green lawn of Polvrehan, with the figures of Marian and Alice. Were they looking at the star, he wondered.

Alas! there was no truth in the picture. The greensward of Polvrehan was trod by strangers, and the daughters of George Carlyon were gone!

Nearer—far nearer than he imagined—under the canopy of smoke which blotted the glory of the sunset sky, the woman he loved was suffering and striving. They were neighbours in the great world of London. Often, doubtless, they passed along the same streets—possibly, within a few minutes of one another, they brushed against the same people—almost touched one another, very likely. But they were as much divided as if miles upon miles of sea rolled between them.

Was this to last for ever? Was that narrow boundary to divide them always? Who knows? Between oceans that yearn to mingle—between hearts that ache to beat in unison—Fate builds a narrow isthmus, or hangs a sombre veil, and they moan and throb for ever in vain.

But, ah, how much comfort might not these two people have derived from meeting each other again! I am not so sure of that. Pride is a veil almost impenetrable, and divides hearts, and it may keep James Trefusis and Marian asunder. We shall see presently.

In the meantime they both suffer and struggle. They do not succumb and shrink into themselves. They work and wait!

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## CHAPTER XV.

### ALICE'S ESCAPADE AND ITS RESULTS.

"A DEUCED pretty girl, my lady," said Lord Lacquoigne, as the new governess left the room where her young charges—like most poor men, his lordship was blessed with a large family—had been committed to her charge.

My lady raised her eyebrows, and looked at his lordship with an air of offended surprise, as much as to say, "Really I cannot be expected to listen to remarks on the personal appearance of servants!"

"A deuced pretty girl," reiterated the nobleman, addressing himself to his own reflection in the glass. He had been a very handsome man in his day, and perhaps he thought to himself, as he looked in that glass, that he might have invested his attractions to better profit. But then her ladyship might have fairly said the same. She had been a fine woman—quite a belle. The fact was that these two people had, each of them, been blessed with sufficient good looks to have made their faces exchangeable for fortunes; but, as I have said, they made the fatal mistake of marrying one another, and so all the capital was wasted; but they never forgot to remind one another of what a folly each had committed.

"Have you received any reports of Henry this morning?" asked my lady, when my lord, having finished his survey of his looks, turned round and took up his *Times* again.

"Yes; his friend Langdale writes to say he is getting on

famously. He is to be removed to Scutari in a few days. The wound in his leg is some trouble still."

"Poor boy, he must suffer," said the mother, and there was an unwonted tenderness in her voice; but it died out as she continued—"Of course he'll get a pension. Why don't you go down and see Sir Benjamin about it at once?"

"No good, my lady. We must wait to see how he gets on. There won't be any difficulty when the right time comes—at least I should think so. Our house has never been backward in the service, and the country will no doubt recognise the fact." And his lordship drew himself up proudly, remembering the time when he was an officer in the 18th Hussars. It is true his services were brought to an abrupt conclusion by the sale of his commission, in consequence of pecuniary embarrassment. But, then, the Lacquoignes had really furnished a few distinguished soldiers. My lord, indeed, owed his title to the fact that his elder brother, who had been all through the Indian campaign with Wellington, got an unfortunate slash from a Cuirassier at Waterloo, which brought his soldiering to an end.

"You might at least go down to the Horse Guards and see if there is not a chance of getting him promoted. There must be many vacancies."

"Egad, not a bad notion, my lady. Are you going out in the carriage? You might drop me at Whitehall if you are."

"No; not until later in the day; and I am going towards the Marble Arch then—down the Edgware Road, in fact."

"Ah, then, while I think of it—just call in at that cheap stationer's and get some note paper. I'll stroll across the Park and drop in at the Horse Guards, and see what's to be done."

So my lord set out, and my lady went on with her sewing.

Lady Lacquoigne, I have said, was a fine woman. She was tall and stately, and she had a most aristocratic nose. In spite of the careworn look which her face habitually bore, you saw that she was of noble birth.

But she was not a woman who inspired confidence and liking the moment you saw her. Hard and unmotherly, she was almost a stranger to her children, so you could hardly expect her to be very warm towards others. She froze poor Alice's heart in her bosom.

Luckily for Alice, however, the children were really nice children. They were not petted, and they were not much impressed with the advantages of noble birth, when they found it did not bring them either toys or pocket money. The Lacquoigne children never were brought up to know the use

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of money. It was an error in their education which avenged itself in after years. It was because as boys they had never known what it was to possess five shillings or half a sovereign that the young heirs of the house almost invariably ran headlong into debt as soon they went to college or entered the army. There is no more fatal mistake than to suppose you teach children the value of money by never letting them have any to spend.

But the little Vorian were none the worse as children for their impecuniosity, and they were in all respects genuine and nice. They took a fancy to Alice at once, and she was delighted with them in her turn. Before they had been acquainted an hour, she was hard at work making dolls' frocks and drawing pictures for them. She found from her ladyship that she need not press the children to learn too much. The boys were to be grounded—there were two boys—in English and arithmetic, as they would, when old enough, be sent to Eton or Harrow. The girls, of whom there were three, were to be taught the elegant accomplishments—in fact, they were to be “got up” for the matrimonial market. As the poor little things hammered away at the piano, or capered gravely through their dancing lessons, they were being prepared for the slave pen, just as in the East they fatten up the fair Circassians to the requisite rotundity of beauty.

The servants of the Lacquoigne household were more agreeable than those of the Orrs, so that in this respect Alice was better off than Marian. The Lacquoignes grew their own servants as they grew their own vegetables. What had once been the flower garden at Beauchet was utilised for the production of cabbages and asparagus. My lord could no more afford to get his supplies from Covent Garden than he could pay the tremendous wages expected by London servants. So he reared his domestics on his own estate. The old housekeeper at Beauchet was always training a few lads for the service—the gamekeeper's sons, or any likely boy she met with on the estate. She was obliged to keep up a good supply, for after the footmen had been in town a season or two they began to have their eyes opened—their views were enlarged by the conversation of other servants—and they very naturally quitted my lord's service to better themselves.

The Lacquoigne footmen, then, were not so supercilious towards the governess as the canary-coloured giants at Mr. Orr's. Indeed, the household generally was inclined to treat her with more consideration—or perhaps I should say with less deliberate slight. Even my lady, feeling that the pedestal on which she stood was tall enough to allow of her condes-

cending gracefully to her inferior without any danger of stooping being mistaken for equality, was far more pleasant than Mrs. Orr was under similar circumstances.

Perhaps it would have been better for Alice if she had been made to feel her position at once. It would have been a sharp pang to discover it so suddenly, but it would have saved an infinity of petty annoyances which were always springing up in her path. She had been so petted and humoured, and was so conscious of the pretty face that was a general passport for her, that she at times was guilty of what my lady could not but set down as impertinences.

On one occasion she had the audacity to go out—it was on a Wednesday, which was a half-holiday as far as lessons were concerned—for the afternoon, taking the omnibus and going over to visit good little Mrs. Bartlett. That worthy soul was surprised to see her, having some sort of knowledge of what is expected of governesses; but when she learnt that Alice had actually given herself permission without applying to Lady Lacquoigne, she was horrified, and told Alice plump and flat that she had better not go back, as it would only be to receive her discharge. Alice began to get frightened, and hastened back to Hertford Street; but her absence had already been discovered, and the footman who admitted her told her that her ladyship was desirous of a few minutes' conversation with her as soon as she arrived. Poor Alice's heart was beating fast as she tapped at the door of my lady's boudoir. It was called her boudoir, because it is the correct thing for a lady to have, but it was in reality a little private vault. There were no flowers—no birds—no charming books or pictures—no musical instrument—no embroidery frame to be seen in the chilly apartment. It was the head-quarters of the "*res augustæ domi*," which the Lacquoignes drove as far as possible out of sight elsewhere. It was, in fact, a combination of the housekeeper's room with the china pantry. Whenever that hard task-mistress Fashionable Necessity called upon my lady to make some sacrifice at her shrine—whether it were the necessity of giving a dinner or the necessity of going to a drawing-room, it was here that the means of contriving this extravagance out of the general penury came to be decided upon.

Alice tapped at the door with a beating heart.

"Come in!" rang out that hard voice, which—as much as anything else—created respect for the needy house of Lacquoigne.

Alice entered the room, trembling.

"I believe your ladyship wished to see me," she murmured. Her ladyship fixed her cold, gray, aristocratic eyes on the

terrified girl, and spoke with a studied distinct harshness, which made poor Alice's heart cease beating, and drop dead within her.

"Do I understand that you have left the house without first asking permission, Miss Carlyle?"—Alice had taken the same name as Marian, at the latter's suggestion—"I inquired for you during the morning, and was informed that you were out."

"I went to see a very——"

"Pray do not for a moment imagine I wish to interfere in any way with your private affairs, friendships, or relationships. In return, I do not expect that you will interfere with whatever arrangement of my household seems right to me. In future, understand, if you please, that I never allow anyone in my employment to arrogate to themselves any judgment as to the convenience or inconvenience of their absents themselves from their duties."

"I assure you, my lady——"

"Pardon me—if you have anything to say, I shall be prepared to hear it when I have finished pointing out my wishes and commands to you. When I engage a nursery governess, I expect her to be constantly with the children. The tuition is, after all, a secondary consideration. I don't believe, in fact, that children learn anything under a governess except the proprieties of conduct, manners, and—obedience. I suppose you were prepared to undertake such a charge when you advertised for a situation. At the same time, I have no desire to prevent your going out—if you have respectable friends to visit, as I suppose you have. We had better, therefore, come to an understanding at once. The children go to church with us on the Sunday afternoon; and as that is the best time for sparing you, we will, if you please, make it a rule that, when you wish to go out, you shall arrange for Sunday afternoon, and make your application to me."

"I have a sister, my lady, who is also a governess. I should like to see her at times——"

"Of course, very naturally. Oh, yes; you can go and see your sister next Sunday."

But Alice had learnt from Marian that visits to governesses were contraband at the Orr's. She never dreamt that there would be any difficulty with the Lacquoignes.

"I meant, my lady, might she not come and see me occasionally?"

"You can hardly have sufficiently considered that request, Miss Carlyle, before making it. Where can you receive your sister?"

Alice was silent. She did not dare to suggest the school-room, though she felt that there could be no harm in Marian's coming there. My lady sat back in her chair—her head on one side, and her aquiline nose a little raised, waiting an answer. As Alice had nothing to say, her ladyship, after a pause, continued :

"Yes ; I thought you had not duly considered that request. It is out of the question."

The truth was my lady wished to have as few strangers as possible admitted to that part of her mansion which was not prepared for the reception of visitors. They would see the nakedness of the land.

The front staircase was carpeted, and adorned with pictures ; and there were flowers in the conservatory, at the top of the first flight. There were tiger-skins and deer-skins for mats ; and there were gilded balustrades, and a fine chandelier. But the back stairs were bare, and the landings scarcely boasted a ragged drugget. The whole arrangement of the house was planned in the same way. There were two footmen in the hall all the afternoon in full livery, with powdered hair and silk stockings. But the one who waited at lunch—there were never any visitors at lunch—waited in a striped jacket to save his livery. Dinner was gone through with due ceremony, and in full dress ; but at breakfast there was no attempt at grandeur. In short, the house of Lacquoigne was a poor rubble-built edifice, plentifully stuccoed on the side that showed to the world ; and my lady very naturally did her best to keep the world from going round to the back, and discovering the very poor basis on which the imitation marble was laid. It was, therefore, not to be expected that she would allow Alice to invite her sister to the house ; more especially as that sister was a governess too, and would no doubt report to her employers the poverty of a noble family. Of course her ladyship could not conceal from herself the fact that people knew of that poverty ; but that was no reason, she felt, why they should learn all the details of pinching and parsimony. A poor nobleman is in the abstract rather grand and touching ; but if you saw him actually varnishing his own boots, or inking the seams of his evening clothes, you might be tempted to smile.

"Have you any remarks to make, Miss Carlyle ?" asked her ladyship, taking up the book she had laid down on Alice's entry, as a sort of hint that she might go. "I said I should be happy to listen to anything you had to urge."

"I have nothing to say, my lady, except that I erred through ignorance in this instance. I beg your ladyship to

excuse it, and to pardon any inconvenience my absence may have caused. It shall never occur again, I can safely promise."

"Very good. Thank you. I have nothing to add. You can go."

This was one of the little disagreeables which beset the beginning of Alice's career. She went up to the school-room and had a good cry; whereupon Arthur—the eldest of the boys—comforted her by telling her that if he was ever Lord Lacquoigne, if anything happened to Brother Henry, she should go out as much as she liked. Constance, the youngest girl, also attempted to console her, and offered to lend her the beautiful wax-doll that her godpapa had sent her on her last birthday. The kindness and caresses of the children were a solace and a relief; so Alice dried her tears, and tried to forget the circumstance. But it was a terrible blow, because it was evident she and Marian should never meet now. She wrote a long and dismal letter that evening, asking Marian what they were to do.

Of course the story of the governess's little escapade, and the interview with Lady Lacquoigne, had reached the servants' hall, where it enlisted the sympathy of the housemaid, Martha. Accordingly, after the children were in bed, as Alice was finishing her letter in the school-room, there came a gentle knock at the door, and Martha came in. She made an excuse that she was in search of a duster which she had lent Miss Constance to wipe up some ink with. The goodnatured creature was brimming with the desire to comfort Alice, but she was a little shy about beginning.

At last, however, feigning to give up the search for the missing duster as hopeless, Martha came and placed herself behind Alice, and gave a little cough—one of those coughs which mean as plainly as words can speak, "Please, I have something to say if you will be kind enough to listen."

Alice turned towards her.

"Oh, if you please, Miss—if I—oh, please—about my lady to-day—if you can't get out, if there's anything I can do—letters, or such, as you wish sent anywheres, I shall be very glad to be any assistance to you. There's a gentleman as is groom to the Honnoble Captain Pranceby, who comes to the servants' hall sometimes—which you'll please not to mention, Miss, please—who will be glad to do anything of that sort for me if you have anything."

"You're very kind, Martha, but I'm only writing to my sister. It can go by to-morrow's post; it will be in plenty of time."



"Oh, indeed, Miss. Ah, yes; but then, you see, I was thinking as there might be some one which you was to have met at any time particular, and as would ought to know."

Martha was under the impression that Alice, like every other well-regulated young person, had a sweetheart, who would be expecting to see her.

"Thank you very much, Martha, for thinking of me; but I was only going to see the lady with whom I lived before coming here."

"There—I call it very hard as you can't go out and see your friends—only going out a-walking with the children."

"I haven't many friends in London, Martha, only that lady and my sister. I should like to see her, but as she, like myself, is a governess, I don't know how it is to be done—but her ladyship says I can get out any Sunday afternoon I like, if I ask permission."

"Then you'll go and see her then, Miss."

"Oh, no; they won't let her receive visitors, any more than her ladyship will allow me!"

"Oh, indeed! Well, now, that's provoking, ain't it?" said the goodnatured maid; but she brightened up all of a sudden, and said, "I suppose she'll get a Sunday out occasional, Miss? Because, if so, there's a bit of the park, by the hornamental water, as is very retired, and quite pleasant, which I know, for I have walked there frequent with a young man as I kep company with in my last place. Now, you know, you might arrange for to meet there, which would be very agreeable to both."

"Really, that is a capital suggestion, Martha. I was wondering how we could possibly manage to meet. It is such a long way to our old lodgings. Thank you, Martha, indeed."

Alice wished to press a half-crown upon Martha, but she would not take it.

"Law, no, Miss! I done it entire through thinking how hard it were on you, and what I should feel being similar situated. I wouldn't take a penny, Miss. No, not for worlds, I wouldn't."

And with that Martha hurried out of the room, and went down to the servants' hall again, where she confided to the cook that the new governess hadn't got a sweetheart, and wasn't it odd? Cook, whose affections were trembling in the balance between A 276, whose beat was in Hertford Street, and a private in the 2nd Life Guards, agreed that the phenomenon of a nice-looking woman (here she glanced at her own red countenance in the polished meat-screen) without

one sweetheart at least, was very peculiar, and she, too, ventured to think, odd.

Alice wound up her letter to Marian with an account of Martha's kindness, and mentioned the suggestion she had made. In her answer, Marian agreed that the idea was an excellent one, and told her sister that Mrs. Orr, for a wonder, had thrown no obstacle in the way of an occasional "Sunday out."

So the two girls, by degrees, became accustomed to the weary, dull monotony of governess life, varied at times by little flashes of sunlight when the long-looked-for Sundays came, and they met in St. James's Park, and talked over all their trials and troubles.

In this way the first half year of their servitude passed over, and then at the end of the season they were separated. Alice went down with the Lacquoignes to Beauchet, and—but for the separation from her sister—would really have passed her time pleasantly enough in the old house, which at times reminded her of Polvrehan. Marian accompanied the Orrs to their newly-purchased estate in Kent—a very raw modern house, in the centre of grounds which were pleasant enough in spite of their being laid out primly, and consisting of as yet very young trees. There was a noble old park close by, which was thrown open to the public, where people picnic'd and spent jolly days in summer, and I hope were duly grateful to the splendid generosity which admitted them to the place, and did no damage to the property. As if in contrast to this magnificent liberality, Mr. Orr placarded his grounds with threats of law against trespassers, and promises of shooting and hanging to stray dogs or cats.

Marian missed her sister terribly, and felt more miserable than she did in town. But she bore it bravely, and did her duty.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## AN AFTERNOON IN A PUBLIC OFFICE.

JAMES TREFUSIS and the captain having now got fairly launched on the right course to success, worked away without ceasing. The neighbours were anything but delighted with their efforts, for a perpetual small cannonade was carried on night and day, by these indefatigable artillerists. One or two of the neighbours who happened to be nervous sufferers really met with severe losses. Old Mrs. Parkins, who "had never been the same woman since the fire as burnt her out of house and home, which she discovered through opening of a cupboard door by the side of the fireplace to get her shawl, and flames a-bursting out sudden as would have devoured her but for her being fortunately drawn out by the feet by a policeman which happened to be looking down the area"—this good lady, I say, was in the act of putting away her tea-service when the two opened fire one evening. Down went the tray, and crash went the crockery, to the infinite agony of Mrs. P., who "dratted them popping and banging idiots" with great fervour. Mr. Tompkins, who was very rheumatic, was always being startled by the sudden discharges, which made him jump and start in a manner very trying to one to whom movement was a thing to be performed quietly and by degrees. Mrs. Stevens, who was a laundress, declared that she was frequently receiving complaints from her customers about the perforated—she said perpetrated, but she meant the other word—state of her linen. And I am bound to confess that for an arm in which precision was boasted as the principal merit, the Trefusis gun certainly did wander a little in its intentions and aims.

But James and his partner in labour were not easily discouraged. They worked at their invention until they had brought it to a high state of perfection. They then devoted their attention to discovering the best sort of shot for their gun, and at last succeeded in satisfying themselves.

The next step was to patent their invention, and having done that, to get a model gun made. That complete, they determined to submit their plan to the military authorities.

"It's no use, Trefusis, I know. We shall never get a chance—but I suppose we must try."

"Well, but the excellence of this is so self-evident, they will have no hesitation."

"You've got to get them to look at it first, my boy."

"They're sure to do that, I think."

"Wait and see—wait and see."

"I fancy you're just a little prejudiced against the officials. Confess it—are you not?"

"No, not a bit. But I know them."

"Knowledge is power," said James, laughingly.

"Yes, but knowledge of official dilatoriness does not give one the power of dealing with it. I'll tell you what it is, Trefusis: you laugh at me, but I have known the pluck and spirit worn out of a man by the long course of—well!—what you will have to begin."

But James was incredulous still. He thought the old soldier was perhaps a little soured by age, or believed he had been slighted. As for the gun; that, James said to himself, was so plainly the right thing—it was so strong, simple, economical, and accurate—that it would recommend itself. It had only to be seen to be appreciated.

So James set to work to obtain a hearing and a trial for his gun.

It was not a very easy thing to find out what was the right course to adopt. He first of all wrote to the Horse Guards. For a fortnight he waited patiently. The old man said he might expect an answer in the course of next year—but when the fortnight was expired James began to fancy he must have addressed his letter wrongly, or omitted to post it. Then he came to the hopeful conclusion that the description and drawings of his invention had so clearly shown its merits that the plan was accepted, and that the delay in answering his letter arose from the necessarily deliberate arrangements as to the purchase of the gun. He told the captain so. But he only laughed at him, and said he would change his opinion before he was many years older. At last there arrived an official missive, an important-looking big envelope with a big seal, and bearing the superscription, "On Her Majesty's Service," in large letters. James was quite delighted with this splendid document, and opened it with an air of pride that mightily amused his friend.

Alas! the long-looked-for, much expected letter was merely a formal acknowledgment of his, and a brief explanation that "this department" was not the right one to apply to in such cases as the one submitted.

So there was James as far as ever from his object.

"They might as well have returned my letter and the draw-

ings. I have a great mind to write and ask for them ; they have probably forgotten to enclose them," said James.

"If you write, you'll perhaps only get snubbed for your pains. Or if you do get the valuable documents back, it won't be for a month or so, and you could do them all over again in a quarter of the time."

"I wonder when they said it wasn't the business of that department, that it didn't occur to them to tell me where I ought to take my invention."

"Catch them at it ! They can't be expected to do more than their own duty. One wouldn't mind if they would only do that."

"Wouldn't you suppose the Commander-in-Chief was the right person to go to in such a matter ?"

"Well, yes ; I confess I should. But I suppose the Ordnance is the place."

To the Ordnance Office, therefore, James wrote. And then came another prolonged wait. However, official dilatoriness does not last for ever, and at length another big envelope, with the talismanic "On Her Majesty's Service," arrived. This time James did not feel any particular emotions of pride and delight in the possession of the missive.

He opened it. It ran as follows :—

"SIR,—I am directed by the Secretary of State to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the — instant, with its inclosures, and to acquaint you in reply that your application is under consideration, and that when a decision has been arrived at a further communication will be addressed to you. I am, however, to add that as applications of this nature have to be submitted in order, some time will probably elapse before any definite conclusion can be come to.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant."

The signature was most imposing—written in a bold and flourished hand, but unluckily—because the signature is an important part of a letter—it was perfectly impossible to make out the name.

"There, my lad," said the old captain, when he had finished reading the missive ; "now you're shelved for several years at least."

"Oh, come, I can stand a good deal, but that will hardly be bearable."

"Well, if not years, months, at any rate."

And the old gentleman was right. Months did pass, and James heard not a word. At last he grew too impatient to bear it any longer, so he started off one fine day to pay a visit to the Ordnance Office.

On entering the hall, he found himself the centre of the curious gaze of about half a dozen messengers, who seemed to be engaged in doing nothing serenely. Although they inspected him carefully, they did not condescend to offer him any further attention. After waiting for a minute to see if they would take any notice of him, James determined to address one of them.

"I have come to make some inquiries about a letter I wrote some time since."

"Raggèts!" said the man he spoke to, turning to another messenger, and paying not the least attention to James; "Raggets—wanted here."

Mr. Raggets, who was a very old and deaf man, shuffled over to James, and asked him what he wanted.

"I wrote a letter some time since, and I called to see if there was any chance of getting an answer."

"What was the subject, Sir?"

"I don't understand you."

"I mean what was it about, Sir: inquiry about a soldier, or application for an appointment?"

"Oh, I see! It was about a gun—a new invention."

"Oh! gun. Let me see—Mr. Crafer's branch, I suppose, Sir. Here, Clarke! take this gentleman to Mr. Crafer."

Clarke, a small smart-looking boy, led James, with a "This way, Sir, please," through a number of dark and intricate passages to a door on which was painted the name of Crafer.

James knocked, and the boy left him. After waiting a moment or so, James knocked again a little louder.

"Come in," shouted a voice, and James opened the door and walked in.

There were four or five desks and tables in the room, at which two or three gentlemen were seated, engaged in writing or reading. One tall, pale young man was standing in front of the fire. Another was gazing out of the window, and a third was engaged with a biscuit and a bottle of beer on the mantelpiece.

This was rather a puzzling multiplicity of "Mr. Crafers" for James. "Methinks there be six Crafers in the field," he might have said with some justice. He was, of course, quite at a loss. The gentlemen had all given him an inquiring glance as he entered, and then they subsided into their former occupations.

For want of a better guide, he determined to trust to chance entirely, so he walked towards the tall young man on the rug, but that worthy no sooner divined his intention than he bolted at once to one of the tables, and plunged wildly into a large

book with an air of intense study. So James transferred his attention to the youth with the beer and biscuit.

"Mr. Crafer?" James began, hesitatingly.

"No. Mr. Crafer sits there," indicating a desk with a wave of his biscuit. But Mr. Crafer was not sitting there, so it must be presumed the young gentleman meant by using the present tense, that Mr. Crafer was in the habit of sitting there.

There followed a pause, the gentleman with the biscuit looking nervous and uncomfortable, and trying to appear as if he were not eating and drinking. At last he ventured to ask James another question.

"Is it public or private?"

"I wrote a letter some time since about a gun which I invented and wished to submit——"

But the young man with the biscuit began to stare in an idiotic manner, and appeared so entirely at a loss what to do or say, that James stopped.

"That isn't for us, is it?" asked the devourer of the biscuit, glancing at some of his brother clerks. They didn't answer him.

"Mr. Crafer is not in the room just now," he continued, turning to James; "perhaps you will be good enough to speak to Mr. Bantam," and he indicated a little fat man who was reading the *Times*.

James accordingly went to Mr. Bantam, and laid his case before him. Mr. Bantam rubbed his bald head sagaciously for a minute or two, as if to stimulate his brains.

"Who sent you to Mr. Crafer?"

James explained that he had been directed to apply to him by the messenger in the hall.

"Ah, yes. It isn't done in our room. You should have gone to No. 76. Who's got 76 now?" he asked of his nearest neighbour.

The nearest neighbour looked up at the ceiling for a minute, and at length stated that he thought Brownlow, but wasn't sure; whereupon another clerk said, "Yes, it was Brownlow," and was contradicted by a third, who alleged it was Tapper. The first clerk here interposed, and said "No, Tapper was in 23;" and there was a brief but brisk discussion, in which the Tapper faction was at last routed by a reference to the office list—a reference which Mr. Bantam might have advantageously made at first.

It having been ascertained, then, that Brownlow was the man who governed 76, Mr. Bantam rang the bell and told James that he would send some one with him to Mr. Brown-

low. At this juncture a gentleman, who had apparently been very hard at work writing at a desk in one corner, seemed to wake up suddenly, and addressed Mr. Bantam.

"I say, I don't think 76 is the right room. Inventions are Bagley."

This assertion was received with great delight by the defeated Tappers, who said, "Yes, of course it was not for 76!" Finally, the awakened gentleman in the corner pronounced that perhaps, after all, as it was a gun question, it would be best to send James to Wigley. The messenger having by this time arrived, in answer to the bell, James was committed to his charge, and he was told to take him to Mr. Wigley.

James thanked the gentlemen for their trouble. As he was leaving the room he took a sly glance at the desk of the awakened gentleman in the corner, and found that the writing on which he had supposed him engaged was really a drawing—a rough caricature of him (James) as he appeared while conversing with the gentleman with the biscuit.

The messenger conducted James through another labyrinth of passages and up a great many flights of stairs, and at last ushered him into the presence of an old gray-headed man, who had a room to himself. "Mr. Bantam, Sir, sent this gentleman to you; it's an application about a gun, Sir," said the messenger. Mr. Wigley got up from his chair.

"What can I do for you, Sir?"

"I sent in drawings and a description of a new gun; I received an acknowledgment, and was told I should hear again. I called to see——"

"Mr. Bantam ought to have known better, Sir. I'm afraid he has given you a walk for nothing. It is quite another branch that you want," and the old gentleman rang the bell furiously, and sent James off under charge of a fresh messenger, despatching also a huffy message to Mr. Bantam.

The messenger took James down stairs, and halting at the end of a long passage, said, "At the end, Sir. First door on the right. You'll see the name on the door. Mr. Ledbitter."

James followed the directions, but unfortunately the end of the passage was too dark to allow of his reading the names on the small cards nailed on the doors. So he opened one at hazard, and asked for Mr. Ledbitter.

"Next room," said one of the occupants of the room; and so at last James found Mr. Ledbitter, and laid his case before him.

Mr. Ledbitter was evidently a very nervous gentleman, and he was clearly overburdened with work. He had combed his hair with his fingers till it stood on end all over his head. His



desk was strewn with open papers and printed forms in terrible confusion.

"Application. Gun!" said Mr. Ledbitter, musingly, worrying his hair all the time into a wilder state of rebellion.

"Yes; a new principle of rifling."

"Ah! they're all that. What is your name, Sir?"

"Trefusis."

"Yes, yes. I remember seeing that name. I think the case has gone on. Take a seat."

James sat down and Mr. Ledbitter dived among his papers until he found a little slip, on which he wrote down James's name and then rang the bell.

"Here, Parker," he said, to the messenger who had answered the summons. "Just go to Mr. Gleeby, in the Registry, and ask him for the number of a paper about a new gun invented by some one of that name. When did you send it in?" he asked, turning to James, who told him how many months ago.

"Oh!" said Mr. Ledbitter, "then you may depend upon it, it is with the authorities!" and he plunged into his papers.

James sat and waited about half an hour, when the messenger returned with the slip, on which some cabalistic characters were now inscribed.

"Where is the paper?" asked Mr. Ledbitter.

"You only told me to get the number, Sir!" said the man.

"What's the good of that? Get me the paper, of course. Make haste, this gentleman is waiting for it," said Mr. Ledbitter testily, returning to his papers.

The messenger still waited by the desk without speaking.

After a moment or so, Mr. Ledbitter became conscious of his presence.

"Well, what is it?"

"They won't give me the paper without your requisition, Sir."

"Oh, ah, yes—to be sure!" and the requisition was written and despatched.

James waited again—this time for nearly an hour—when the messenger returned with the requisition.

"You've been a very long time," said Mr. L., "where is it?"

"I have been tracing it down, Sir. It is charged to you by the Artillery Branch, on the 12th of the month."

"Pooh, nonsense. It went on to the authorities. Just bring me my book."

The book was brought, and on reference to it Mr. Led-

bitter was obliged to own that "he must have got it somewhere." Finally, he discovered it under his very nose, it being, in fact, the paper on which he was engaged when James arrived.

"Oh, yes," said the unblushing Ledbitter, "here it is. I thought I remembered seeing it lately. What is it you wish to know?"

James expressed a desire to learn when there would be any likelihood of his hearing what was thought of his plan.

"Oh! Well, you see, it's under consideration. I shall send my report forward in a day or two."

Would it be settled then? James inquired. Oh dear no! it would have to be sent back to the Artillery Branch, and then to the Private Secretary, and then to the Director of Ordnance. Would the question be decided in a month? James inquired. Mr. Ledbitter really could not say. In a year? Mr. Ledbitter still declined to offer an opinion. Could Mr. Ledbitter say whether there was any chance, judging from the present stage of proceedings, of the gun being adopted? Mr. Ledbitter immediately shrank into his official shell, and refused to divulge the secrets of the office.

So after all his trouble and waste of time, James went home no wiser than before—except as to the manner in which public business was conducted at the Ordnance Office.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## A MEETING IN THE PARK.

THERE is something exquisitely delightful in spring, even in London. Indeed I am inclined to think that, as a prisoner learns to love the narrow strip of view he sees from his grated window better than all the world beside, so the poor folk who are imprisoned in the great capital learn to value the glimpses of spring which are granted them. They cannot afford to overlook a mite of it. The bursting of the chestnut leaf from the brown sheath—the mist of green that spreads and deepens on the elms—the very chirp of the dingy sparrow—they note and prize. And the delight such a mere instalment of spring should give them ought to be very intense indeed, for they miss much of its real loveliness. They do not know what it is to wander where the young corn is springing with its fresh bright green, and its colonies of larks, that soar and sing—not to mention the myriad of other birds, bright of colour, sweet of note, that perform Nature's matin-song

All at once, and all in tune !

They know nothing of the pure intensity of a warm spring sky—so deeply, calmly blue that the budding elms shine out almost golden against it—so blue, that in meadows where the broad-bladed grass is abundant the hue is caught and reflected by the glossy herbage, and a tinge of azure gleaming here and there in the fields tells how intense is the colour of the depths overhead. They know nothing of the glorious silence—so vast that you can hear the grasshopper churring in the next field—a silence that is only the more perceptible because at times the cuckoo's note sets you puzzling where the bird can be ; or the low of the kine, grateful for the fresh herbage, comes to you ; or the birds pipe and twitter—the bold black-bird, with his rich whistle—the “ wise thrush,” who

Sings his song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture ;

or sweet nightingale, whose note is, by day at least, anything but melancholy. All these sounds of Nature do but enhance the stillness where the hum of insects is heard instead of the

murmur of a million men. But now and then humanity asserts itself, not unpleasantly or obtrusively. The rattle of a far-distant train, the voices of the workers in the fields, or the quaint chant of the bird-boy, will fall on the ear to tell you that you are not in an uninhabited land. Or the smoke goes wavering up, blue against the newly-leaved elms in the hedge-row, where a little red gable peeps; or you see children in the fields gathering cowslips, and their merry laughter ringing out harmonises with the rejoicing sounds of Nature.

All this the poor Londoner misses. It is true that he can at times take a flying glimpse of the country. He can rush away for a gasp of unsmoked air. But he finds himself a stranger to the birds and leaves and green things. They are not familiar to him, and he has not watched them from the first vernal stir that made the buds begin to swell and the clubs of the fern unfold, and sent the starling off to build his nest under the cottage eaves. He can't remember the time when that broad bright green leaf on the lowermost bough of the chestnut was no bigger than a fly's wing, and he doesn't know the particular hedge where there is always a nightingale to be heard. In fact, he pays a mere formal morning call to Nature, and feels no more at his ease than most morning callers. Nor is it the unhappy Londoner only who misses these things. Rich folks and noble are, of their own free will, losers in the same way. They spend immense sums on their estates; they beautify the villages near their country houses; they have lovely flowers planted, and they have the hedges trimmed, and they place picturesque little plantations along the road, or plant groups of trees at the junction of two or three highways. And then—just when they are going to benefit by what they have done—when they are going to realise the profit on their capital—when generous Nature, who is indebted to them for all this, is going to repay the loan with glorious interest—lo and behold! my lord and my lady order out the family chariot, and go off to town for the season! So Hodge, the ploughboy, and James, who looks after the cows, and the young artist, who is stopping in the village, and the poor author, who is on a visit to an old chum, who is now vicar of the parish—get all the good things which my lord and my lady have paid for.

"Lord Lacquoigne and family, from Beaucechet," says the *Court Journal* early in the season. And the world no doubt is much pleased to learn that his lordship has arrived in town.

Poor Alice was getting used to her mode of life now, but she was very sorry to leave the country just as it

was putting on its fairest. However, there was no help for it; so she had to bear it with a good grace, and satisfy herself with as much of spring as is vouchsafed to the Londoners.

She was, moreover, greatly consoled by the remembrance that Marian would probably come to town, too, in a short time, and that their walks in the Park on Sunday afternoons would be very pleasant—far more so than they had been just before my lord took his family down to Beaudechet, for the days had been cold and drizzling, and depressing, as only thorough London winter days can be.

Mr. Orr was in town quite as soon as Lord Lacquoigne. You would hardly expect otherwise; for were not the weighty interests of the nation at large, and Axeford in particular, entrusted to Mr. Orr's keeping? There never was a member more regular in his attendance than Mr. Orr; he was the first to come and the last to go, and he was always sure to be the one in the little select party that Mr. Speaker points at with his hat as he proceeds to count the House, "at the suggestion of an honourable member." Mr. Orr's pride was never to neglect a duty. He attended to his business in the City daily as long as he was in town; and then he went down to the House (he was far too correct an M.P. ever to dream of using any other expression than "went down" to describe his departure towards St. Stephen's), and sat there until very often all was literally blue—at least overhead. While he was in the country he devoted two or three hours a day to a voluminous correspondence which he kept up with his office in town. Oh, Mr. Orr never neglected any duties—except the Christian virtues. He never neglected any duties; that is at least unless you count such trifles as humanity, charity, loving-kindness, mercy, and justice, as duties. At any rate, he never omitted to present himself at the doors of "the cosiest club in London"—to wit, the House of Commons—on the first day of Session.

My Lord of Lacquoigne came to town early because he was expecting the arrival of his son from Scutari, where he had been in hospital ever since the battle of Inkermann. My lord was fond of his son, I think, though my lady, it is to be feared, looked upon all her children as encumbrances.

Alice was in a flutter of expectation, which, however, she contrived to conceal from the stern eyes that glared stonily on either side of that aristocratic nose of my lady's. Alice had always been subject to that feminine weakness, an admiration of military glory and show. It is extraordinary how mild and gentle ladies are affected by the sight of a red coat or a pair

of shoulder-straps ! They would shrink from their own brother if he had killed a single man, and were merely a civilian ; but they idolise the warrior who has pistolled three, and cut down six, and fired away a dozen Sepoys from a gun. I don't for a moment mean to say that the heroes deserve no attention, but the sex does seem to be rather contradictory and uncertain, does it not ? Here was Alice, who would have screamed at a mouse, and certainly never would have found courage to kill one, looking forward to the arrival of this young fire-eater with great curiosity and anxiety.

The Honourable Henry Vorian's two brothers sang his praises loudly, as you may imagine. He was really kind to the lads, and supplied them, when he was at home, with pocket-money out of the funds which he should have reserved for the settlement of his debts ; so the lads were naturally fond of him. But they had also read of the great battle in which their brother had taken part, and they knew the description pretty nearly by heart. But they added to and improved the narrative so much at every recital that at last, if you had credited their account of it, the battle of Inkermann was won by Captain the Honourable Henry Vorian single-handed against the whole Russian army. Alice had heard the story so often that I think she really half believed it.

You remember Alice had always been a little disposed to admire "a real captain," so it is no wonder that she looked forward to Henry Vorian's arrival, for he was not only a real live captain, but one who had seen service and had been wounded.

She and Marian met in the park, at the old place, on the first Sunday after their arrival in town. It was a lovely spring day, and London's instalments of the delights of the season was large. The trees were all fresh and green, and even the grass was less sooty-looking than usual. The water was placid, and reflected as much blue sky as could penetrate the perpetual atmosphere of smoke which hangs over the metropolis. There were a few aristocratic birds—I suppose at least, they were "noble birds" come up for the season, for I can see no other reason why they should exchange the country for the town—singing and chirping in the trees. And then there was the Sunday look which everything seems to put on once a week—I don't know why or how—and the people, dressed in their best clothes, sauntering about in the park, or seated on the grass. And over all the ceaseless clamour of the bells of London's numerous churches clashed out merrily, and the roar of the streets was hardly heard, there is so little traffic on a Sunday, comparatively.

Marian was at the rendezvous first, and sat down, feeling as if for an hour or so at least she were emancipated from her slavery, and her own mistress once more. She enjoyed the delightful spring weather, with the bright green of the young leaves, the blue sky, the warm sun, and the cool breeze. She became lost in thought at last, and began to indulge in all sorts of day-dreams, from which she was aroused by finding Alice's arm round her neck.

"You dear old darling, a penny for your thoughts," said Alice.

"How can you be so reckless, my dear?" said Marian, with a grave smile; "a poor governess has no right to be throwing away her money in that way!"

"Oh, I have got more than a penny, Min; I've just had my quarter's salary. It is a little overdue, but her ladyship told me the rents hadn't come in. Marian?"

"Yes, my darling."

"Are noblemen ever poor?"

"I believe so, and they have a position and appearances to keep up."

"Law, there; I declare I thought a nobleman couldn't be poor, and yet one could not help fancying Lord Lacquoigne was poor, because they do such funny things."

"I believe his lordship is poor. You know Mr. Orr is a friend of his—he and Mrs. Orr were stopping at Beauchefet this Christmas, weren't they? And I have heard him speak of his lordship as being very poor indeed. But then Mr. Orr is so wealthy that what seems 'very poor' to him might seem enormously rich to us."

"Isn't it odd, Marian, that Mr. Orr, who is in business, should be so much better off than his lordship? He isn't half such a gentleman, and not nearly so agreeable. Lord Lacquoigne is really very kind to me in his manner, Min. But my lady is so terribly stiff and cold I can't get on with her. She is really what good Mrs. Bartlett called her—'a stinger.' She can say such disagreeable things with a quiet voice and a smile."

"I'm afraid you're not very happy, Alice dear."

"Oh, yes, I am! I get on capitally with the children, who are nice little things. And what do you think, Min?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Marian, patting her sister's cheek affectionately.

"His lordship's eldest son, who is an officer in a regiment of the Guards, is coming home, wounded, from the Crimea!"

"Dear me, what a treat for certain people who have a remarkable liking for a gallant officer."

"Now, don't you begin to tease, or I'll go home. Besides, hasn't everyone a right to be proud of our gallant soldiers?"

"Oh, of course, especially when the gallant soldier in question is young, handsome, and the heir to a peerage."

"Mind! If you don't take care, I shall go home!"

"No, please don't; I promise I won't say anything more about captains and red coats."

"Now, don't be so provoking! I can't tell you anything without your beginning to tease. But won't it be nice to see some one who has been in a real battle in the Crimea?"

"You little goose, I believe you are wishing you had been in a 'real battle' too. You would have got in a terrible fright if you had been within twenty miles! Just fancy all the big guns firing! Why, you'd go to bed and cover your head up, and die of fright. And yet you think it so nice to see some one who has been in a 'real battle,' and perhaps killed one or two real men. What a ferocious little person you are."

"There! You're teasing again!"

"Well, Alice darling, if I am, it is only fun, and because I really don't know what to think of such a susceptible heart as yours exposed to the fascinations of an interesting young hero."

"Oh, you know, we shan't see much of each other. I'm always in the school-room, and I suppose he will be quite a lion, and always out."

"Well, I don't know, Alice; there are so many Crimean heroes going about now, that the novelty has a little worn off, I fancy. At all events, I heard Mrs. Orr object to asking some officer to dinner the other day, because Crimean heroes were so common—a drug in the market, as Mr. Orr describes it."

"Well, if he doesn't go out much, I suppose I shall see very little of him, for I am kept entirely in the school-room, and I suppose he is too old to be sent there—unless I am expected to teach him to read and write, as well as the others. What fun it would be, wouldn't it? But there, poor fellow, I suppose he can't write, for his right arm was shot off, or cut off."

At this moment the clock struck the hour of six, when Alice had to hurry off to Hertford Street.

"Good-bye, dearest Alice!"

"Good-bye, dear old Min!"

They took a tender leave of one another, and parted. Marian was not bound to be back quite so early as Alice, and she wandered about the park, naturally wishing to avoid a return to her bondage.

As she was leaning over the railings by the side of the water, watching some children feeding the aquatic birds, she



heard a familiar voice that woke a strange echo in her heart, and made it bound with the recollection of old days—gone, as she fancied, never to return.

She looked round, and saw that two gentlemen had placed themselves on a seat close by. The one was an old grey-headed man, who wore a blue surtout, buttoned up, and a very glossy hat, placed jauntily a little on one side. He had a military look, and appeared to be very deeply engrossed in the conversation in which he was engaged with his companion, a much younger man.

And that younger man was James Trefusis!

Yes! after so long a separation, during which doubtless neither had forgotten the other, the two met again—were drifted together by Chance—or shall we give it a more solemn name?

For a few moments Marian was quite at a loss what to do. Should she speak to him, or wait until they came to where she stood? He would no doubt recognise her then. She determined to wait.

Presently the two rose and came towards her. They were very deep in talk, and James was unluckily on the side nearest her. When, therefore, they came up with her, he was looking towards the old man, and would have passed her unnoticed. What should she do? It seemed so unmaidenly to stop him. Could she do so? Would he speak to her after those words of hers, which she felt had caused a sort of estrangement?

There was no time to lose. She must decide on her plan of action that instant, or he would be gone—would disappear in the vast tide of life ebbing and flowing through the great city, and be lost to her for ever.

She stepped forward and laid a hand on his arm!

"James! Mr. Trefusis!"

He stopped, paused in his conversation, and turned towards her inquiringly. There was no great curiosity in the action as he first turned towards her. But the next moment the whole truth flashed on him. He staggered and caught at the railing to support himself.

"Mar—Miss Carlyon! Good God! what does this mean?"

He was looking at her faded cloak—her poor modest little straw bonnet. The change in her appearance filled him with wonder and alarm.

"Did not you know? I thought you had heard. Poor papa is dead, and we were left without a penny."

"Good Heavens, this is a dream, surely! Pray sit down here. You appear to be ill. Tell me what this means."

"It means that Alice and I are governesses, Mr. Trefusis."

"You used to call me James in the old days when I was your father's servant, Miss Carlyon. Have I done anything to forfeit your friendship? I shall be proud to serve you in any way still."

"Oh, thank you! You were always so kind to us!"

"I shall be most truly happy if I can do anything to serve you now. You know that, I hope."

"Oh, yes, I do—thank you."

She laid her hand in his. Their eyes met—and then, without a word spoken, I think the old wrong was repaired, forgiven, and forgotten.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE RETURN OF THE HEIR OF LACQUOIGNE.

HENRY VORIAN was heartily sick of campaigning—and small wonder, for he had seen but little of it, and that only the disagreeable part. The glitter and enthusiasm of warfare were wanting to his experience of the Crimean expedition. The dull monotony of the siege, and the weary watching in the trenches, had been very tiresome; but when he exchanged them it was for a far worse tedium and languor—the irksome humdrum life of the hospital.

When he was ordered home on sick leave, he was as pleased as a boy going home for the holidays. It was a dreary place that paternal mansion in Hertford Street, and there was no over-abundance of affection there to light it up; even the grandeur was but a twopenny sort of grandeur—poverty in purple; but, compared with the four white blank walls in his little room in the hospital, for the first time in his life, home really seemed like home to him.

The transport at last steamed out of the Golden Horn, and turned its head towards the old country. Henry Vorian hobbled about the deck in high glee. Every revolution of the paddles that churned the blue wave to foam was taking him nearer home, and farther from that hateful place. In vain did Constantinople look her loveliest, crowned with domes and minarets—in vain did the still waters give back the image of the Eastern fairy city—in vain did gaudy caiques, gliding about among the fleet, lend colour and motion to the picture. Henry Vorian hated the place and everything connected with it. He shook the only fist he possessed in the direction of the

hospital, vowing that he had never been so miserable in his life as he was when he was cooped up in dreary inaction in the hospital ward.

"I'll tell you what, Vo," said a brother officer, who was returning to England minus a leg, "you would find a residence in Cursitor Street quite as wearisome, if it ever were your luck to get into the hands of some amiable Israelite."

"I suppose I should," said the heir of Lacquoigne; and his glee died out rather suddenly, and his countenance became very grave. He had forgotten about debts and duns latterly, and his friend's remark reminded him that he was returning to a country where there were many tradespeople who would feel a great interest in his recovery. They no doubt had looked over the lists of killed and missing with considerable anxiety, to learn whether Captain the Hon. H. Vorian had paid about the only debt that he would find no great difficulty in settling—the debt of Nature. He pictured to himself the dismay of his creditors when they read the account of the battle of Inker-mann, and learned that Captain the Hon. Henry Vorian of the 5th Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards, was seriously wounded. With what concern they would read that amputation would probably be necessary, and how fervently they would long to hear how the patient bore the operation, and whether he was improving or no.

It is terribly unromantic this, no doubt: but then you see it is true, nevertheless. When men in England were reading, with flushed faces, the story of that splendid charge of the Light Brigade—were ready to cheer over the breakfast-table, and wave their *Times* in frantic enthusiasm, as they learned how the gallant brigade rode straight through the hail of shot and shell roaring upon them from all quarters—were ready to cry with pride and grief when they were told how few of the noble fellows came back alive from that avalanche of death, there were such things as tailors, say, who, when they found that of a certain regiment that went into action so many strong, only about a third, scarcely a quarter, came back alive, went to their shelves, and taking down their books, looked to see how many customers they had in that regiment, and how many of them had accounts standing against them unsettled.

Harry Vorian was quite aware of this. He knew the interest with which he was regarded by his creditors. He was, in fact, a joint-stock speculation of theirs, and, I regret to say, some of the shareholders in him were desirous of realising, and so getting out of the "adventure;" which was awkward for him. Fancy the heir to a barony being nothing more or less than an advertising medium. If Sir Richard Mayne had taken it into

his head at this time to put down unoffending boardmen, an acute myrmidon of his might fairly have taken our captain into custody. For what was he doing but puffing the commodities of his creditors? He was always with the first lot in the pursuit of fashion, and he was admirably dressed, well gloved, and neatly booted, with a faultless beaver. And the tradesmen who turned him out in this style got their profit out of it, for the friends of so faultless a swell were sure to inquire with whom he dealt. As he sauntered in Bond Street, or lounged in the Row, he was, in point of fact, earning his clothes, and might just as well have carried a board at once, with "Try Suippem's coats. Baggs is the right tailor for trousers. Observe Shears's vests. Carstair's guinea hats are best. Go to I. Beck's for kid gloves," and many more such puffing phrases.

But, unluckily, in one or two instances a tradesman would discover that at times the brother officers whom the aristocratic boardman sent him were no better off than himself, and bad debts were the consequence. Then the confiding creditor would get a little savage on occasion, and the captain's quarters became uncomfortably warm for him, owing to the number of little notes that came in requesting the settlement of "little accounts" of considerable magnitude.

As Henry Vorian began to recall the number of his creditors and the amount of their claims, the prospect before him lost a good deal of its *couleur de rose*. I am not sure whether, if it had been in his power to do so, he would not have ordered the nose of the snorting transport to be turned towards Scutari. He might have put up with the everlasting dulness of his hospital room rather than return to his snug quarters in town, which would probably be a little too lively, thanks to the attentions of frequent callers with unpaid bills in their hands.

However, there was nothing to be done but to submit to fate and the homeward course of the puffing old transport, "The Lady of the Lake." But somehow poor Vorian's cheerfulness was damped, and he did not limp about the deck in quite so sportive a manner as at first. He did not seem so anxious to see the white cliffs he had been spouting about at the commencement of the voyage, and he grumbled about the bayonet wound in his leg, and growled over the lost arm.

But just as his desire for England could not lend wings to the unwieldy "Lady of the Lake," so now his wish to retard her course did not check her career, and delay one turn of her paddles, or one courtesy of her engines, which bobbed their heads up and down under a sky-light, as if they were taking lessons in deportment.

At last the white cliffs hove in sight, and before long Captain the Honourable Henry Vorian, 5th Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards, was put ashore with his baggage in the land of his birth—and his debt.

He was met by his father and two brothers in the carriage, and a warm greeting it was; for the old peer, I believe, really liked his son, and was proud of him, feeling, perhaps, too, that he was, as it were, restored to him from the dead. The boys, I have already said, were very fond of him.

So the dreary old chariot picked him up, the baggage was mounted on a cab, with one of my lord's footmen to look after it, and away they rattled to Hertford Street, where my lady was sitting in state to receive her son, and gave him the cold, wrinkled cheek on the left hand side of her very aristocratic nose to kiss, and made him a little speech that might have been put into Greek, and attributed to a Spartan mother.

The girls received him with great delight. The second girl, who was not very fond of her dancing lessons, said, gravely, that she thought it would be very nice for Henry not to be obliged to waltz now his arm was gone. And then the boys were curious to know whether he could go through the broadsword exercise with his left arm, and how he could manage to hold the reins, and whether being wounded was rather painful or otherwise, and what was having your arm cut off like, with a host of similar questions.

By-and-by the children were sent up to their governess, and my lord, my lady, and the captain sat down to a very modest lunch—some cold shoulder of mutton and a glass or two of Marsala.

Such was the reception of the returned heir, and such the feast prepared in his honour. It was not very exhilarating; nor did the cheerfulness increase excessively when my lady, after lunch, invited her son into the boudoir, and then and there drew his attention to some bills which had been sent in while he was away.

"I really cannot undertake to pay bills for you now, Henry," said my lady, putting up her chin with a half-offended air, and looking at him steadily along her aquiline nose. "You have your pay and your allowance, and you must make them do; and I must say that I think you should not permit me to be annoyed with your bills. Why do you have them sent here? There are plenty as it is!"

"How could I help the beggars sending 'em in?" said the captain; "I suppose they thought I was a gone coon, and that they would have to come on the governor for my debts."

"I should advise my lord to decline to have anything to do with them—let there be no mistake about that, Henry," said this fond mother. "I wish, too, you would not indulge in your barrack-room language here. It's a very bad example for the children, and I am sure most unbecoming in the heir to a title like ours. But then you know, Henry, you never had any proper pride or refinement. I don't know where you have got your disposition—not from my family, I'm sure!"

"There, for goodness sake, mother, don't begin to lecture me the moment I get home. And as for the language—the barrack-room language, as you are kind enough to call it—I don't think there's any great harm in it, provided you don't swear. All the fellows talk slang; why, hang it all, I've heard girls do it—swells too—the Somerleigh and Graveston girls, for instance."

"You need not remind me of the disgraceful decline of manners in these vulgar days. Young men are now little better than bears, and the girls are something terrible. In my time, well-born youth was distinguished by a repose and grace which the present generation seems to be incapable of."

"And a very nice pleasant sort of people to have to do with, your 'repose and grace' youth must have been. Starch and pipeclay—very good things in their way, but a terrible nuisance anywhere, except in linen and cross-belts."

"No want of taste in you, Henry, can surprise me. After the amazement I have felt to think I could have such a son, I have no wonder left to bestow on the details of your sad degeneracy!"

"Thank you, mother; I suppose you won't forbid my associating with the children; I promise you I won't corrupt their morals, or do anything to injure the lessons of 'repose and grace.' And if you'll allow me, I think I shall be rather more jolly in their company than here."

So Henry Vorian limped out of his mother's boudoir, and stumped up stairs to the children's room.

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, as he opened the door and found Alice seated at the window, with the children round her; "I was not aware that the little folk had a visitor."

"I am not a visitor, Sir; I am their governess."

"The deuce you are! I beg your pardon, I really have been in uncivilised parts until I have almost forgotten the usages of society. But I am surprised at not having heard that the youngsters had a governess. I'm Henry Vorian, my lord's eldest son, and a very unfortunate party, Miss—There, declare I must ask you to tell me your name."

"My name is Alice Carlyle."

"And mine Henry Vorian, as I have already mentioned. So I hope we shall be good friends after so ceremonious an introduction."

Alice laughed. She felt quite at her ease at once. There was something so frank and unpretending in his manner.

"I must ask you," he continued, "to give me the *entrée* of the school-room, Miss Carlyle, for I'm a damaged old soldier, and they don't want me anywhere down stairs. And between you and me, I don't care much about society. Besides, what is a one-armed old pensioner to do at balls and dinners? He hasn't got an arm to give when required; and, as you see, my hobble is not very graceful yet. I don't know what it may be when I have practised it for a few years."

"I hope the injury is not so serious as you think."

"Well, no! To tell the truth, my doctor says I shall be all right as far as the wound in the leg goes; I only want quiet and good living."

"I say, Henry," chimed in one of the boys, "what do you think Harriet says?"

"Haven't a notion, young 'un."

"Why she wants to know whether your arm won't grow again."

"I haven't any intention of growing another arm just at present, Mademoiselle Harriet; but perhaps I should be grateful for the receipt for encouraging the growth if necessary. Is it Macassar oil?"

"Don't be foolish, Sir," says the little lady; "I dare say you might grow another. I read in my natural history, the other day, that when a lobster loses its claw, another grows in its place; and if a lobster can do that, I suppose you can."

"Oh, of course I can. But then, you see, as I haven't lost a claw, I don't want to grow another."

"No, not a claw, but then an arm is very much the same. I should try, if I were you."

"I'll think about it, and then let you know."

"You bear your misfortune very good-temperedly," said Alice.

"Well, when you must bear a thing, it is just as well to grin and do it."

At this moment the children's tea was brought in, and they sat down to it, Alice presiding.

"May I have tea, too?" asked Henry.

"Oh, certainly; we shall be very happy—shall we not, Harriet?"

"If he behaves himself properly," says the little lady.

"Oh, I'll be the best of boys, Harriet."

The tea passed very pleasantly, and Henry Vorian was capital company. At the request of his brothers he described the battle, which to their surprise, he did very differently from the newspapers. He sent down for his dressing-case presently, and took out a little box of odds and ends which he had brought away as relics from the Crimea. These he divided among the children, giving the boys bullets picked up on the battle-field, and giving the girls little trinkets and buttons taken from the dead Russians. As he was closing the box, Harriet picked out a little platinum locket.

"What are you going to do with that, Henry?"

"Give it to Miss Carlyle, if she cares to have a relic."

"I shall value it very much indeed. How very pretty it is; I really don't like to deprive you of it."

"Oh, you won't deprive me at all. I have a lot of things of the same sort I bought of a Zouave in the hospital."

"Thank you, I shall value it very much."

"I shall have a hole bored in my bullet, and make it a charm for my watch-chain, when I have one," said one of the boys.

"I shall have a pin put to this button," said Harriet, "and make a brooch of it. What shall you do with yours, Miss Carlyle?"

"I think I will wear it on my watch-guard," said Alice.

She took of the guard, which was made of her mother's hair, and tried to attach the locket. The ring was a little too large, however, and she had some difficulty with it.

"Let me help you," said Henry Vorian; and the next minute both their heads were bent over the obdurate ring, Alice's soft curls almost touching Henry's cheek, and their fingers meeting every now and then by chance.

There is nothing more dangerous for a susceptible youth than such a delicate employment as this. Henry Vorian had seen little of female society in the Crimea—hospital nurses and camp-followers. And now here he was engaged in the difficult task of putting a locket on a split-ring, that would not open, for a young lady of most prepossessing appearance. The position was trying, and he became so nervous that he fumbled and dropped the locket, and had to give up the attempt in despair, leaving Alice to manage it with a pair of scissors.

No wonder that as he went down stairs to his own room to dress for dinner, he said to himself, "Egad, that's an uncommonly pretty girl!"

And what did Alice say?

"What a very pleasant, agreeable fellow!"



I wonder what my lady would have said as she sat in her chilly boudoir if she had discovered where and how the heir of the house of Lacquoigne had spent his afternoon? The aristocratic chopper of a nose would have put on a keener edge, and the sharp gray eyes would have kindled. For it was tacitly agreed on in the family that Henry was just the sort of man to be admired by Miss Orr. And Miss Orr was a most desirable match; and the whole arrangement was so easy and so convenient, that it must be carried out.

Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Orr dined with my lord that evening. But as Captain the Honourable Henry Vorian, 5th Battalion Scotch Fusilier Guards, was taking Miss Alicia Orr down to dinner, he was saying to himself, "What an uncommonly pretty girl!"—and he was not alluding to Miss Orr, who on this evening looked even more peaky and pink-eyed than usual. I'm afraid the captain was not very attentive to her.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### PLIGHTED TROTH.

WHEN James Trefusis and Marian parted after their unexpected meeting in the park, he asked for and obtained her address. The presence of the old captain was, of course, a restraint upon the freedom with which they could otherwise have talked over old times. Marian naturally could not tell James all about her father, and he felt a delicacy in questioning her about her altered fortunes. So they tacitly agreed to meet before long, though Marian could not help considering to herself how she was to arrange to see him again.

She had not waited many days before she received a note from James expressing his anxiety to learn what had happened to such old and kind friends, and asking her to allow him to see her or hear from her before long. What could she do? Sundays were her only holidays, and then Alice would be terribly disappointed if she did not see her in the park as usual. To be sure there was no reason why James should not come to their rendezvous—of course he took as much interest in Alice as in her, or so she tried to persuade herself. But she had much to tell him of which Alice was ignorant—and of which she had better remain ignorant. And then, somehow, this poor girl wished—selfishly enough, perhaps, but affection

is jealous in this way—to have James Trefusis all to herself. It seemed only yesterday that in her young days at Polvrehan she had flown to him for aid and counsel in all her little difficulties. And now she indeed needed help and advice.

She was at a loss what to do. She delayed for a day or two before she answered James, racking her brains to try and devise some expedient for appointing a meeting. And just when she felt that he might be offended at her longer silence, chance did for her what she had failed to do for herself.

The house of Lacquoigne, stirred for awhile by the arrival of the heir and his laurels, settled down again to its melancholy calm and hollow grandeur. The season, as I have said, was just commencing, and there were not very many people in town as yet, so those who gave entertainments were glad enough to ask the Lacquoignes, in order to fill up their rooms. They would have to be invited sooner or later, and by being invited now might be made to do good service. Accordingly night after night the chariot, with its very shaky job-horses, was in requisition, and my lord and my lady rolled about from party to party, having nothing to console themselves withal for the discomfort save the recollection that their absence from home was a saving in gas, dinner or supper, as the case might be, and wine.

The Honourable Captain Henry Vorian had never cared much to go into society. He had always preferred his club, where he had his whist or his game at billiards, to balls and dinners. His Crimean campaign had not increased his inclination for fashionable gaiety, so he steadily declined all invitations on the plea of ill-health.

He lounged about lazily in my lord's library, converted for the nonce into a smoking-room, which it resembled quite as much as a library, the shelves not being overcrowded with books, owing to his lordship's caring little for any sort of reading beyond a study of the Game Laws. But even a smoking-room wearies a man when he has no company, so occasionally Captain Vorian would find his way up to the nursery, where he romped with the children, or chatted with the governess.

I don't mean for one moment to accuse the gallant gentleman of conduct so unbecoming an officer and a gentleman as would be implied by a knowledge of the works of one William Shakespeare, an obscure cad, who once held swells' horses at a theatre. But I must say that had I considered him capable of so grave a breach of military etiquette, I should have thought him guilty of a plagiarism on that play-wright's tragedy of "Othello." He found out that Miss Alice Carlyle

never looked to better advantage than when she was listening to hair-breadth 'scapes and encounters in the imminent deadly breach. Her large blue eyes would dilate, and her soft cheek flush—now and then her brows would knit with a pretty frown, and anon her rosy lips would smile sweetly on some recital of a deed of “derring do.” And as it was very pleasant to excite these pretty phenomena, Henry Vorian found a great delight in telling stories of the war to his brothers and sisters, as he leant back in the rocking-chair with half-closed eyes watching Alice's face.

Every man is proud of exercising a power over a woman, and when that woman happens to be pretty, he is probably rather fond of indulging his pride. But then, you see, a pretty woman is a dangerous article to have to do with. It must have been fascinating work in the old days to be a compounder of poisons—to be able to enshrine

Pure death in an earring, a casket,  
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket—

to make such exquisite drugs that their mere beauty disarmed suspicion—to handle little bright-hued phials, each one containing a human life. But, then, the pursuit had its perils. Not to mention such a drawback as the intense inclination that must have sprung out of this awful familiarity—the strong temptation to take just one little ruby drop, which was certain instant dissolution—there were a thousand haphazard chances. The failure of the silken thread that bound on the glass mask!—and the poisoner fell shrivelled by the fumes he had himself evoked—the merest scratch with the tiny stiletto, which was so useful in conveying the deadly grain into the ripe peach, and left no mark of puncture—the merest scratch with that, and death coursed like an electric spark through the veins, and stayed the heart's pulsations for ever! Lovely woman may not feel flattered at the figure I have chosen to illustrate the danger of trifling with her power. But in truth I know no more apt simile—nothing that can so fully express the insidious influence of her beauty, its fatal fascination, or the sudden revolution which turns the master into the slave.

Let the Honourable Henry Vorian beware, therefore. He is becoming giddy with his success already.

When he learnt that my lord and my lady and he have been invited to Sir Arthur Mostyn's at Richmond, to spend the next Sunday, and that my lord and my lady are going, and “he can do as he pleases”—so his mother kindly informs him

—he makes up his mind to stay at home. But he is not content with that. He actually has the audacity to tell Miss Alice Carlyle that he hopes she is not going out on that Sunday, or he shall be a very lonely and disconsolate invalid. And, indeed, of late he has been far from well. Whether it is that he is a little shy of appearing abroad in his dilapidated condition, or that he finds something at home which disinclines him to go abroad, one thing is certain, that he does not take enough exercise, and his doctor tells him so ; but he does not regard his doctor. He grows pale and languid, and lacks appetite, and nobody regards it, for my lord is busy and my lady is cold, and only the little governess has eyes to see that he is not improving.

She, at all events, cannot resist his appeal for pity and companionship, so she writes off at once to Marian to say that she will not be able to be at the rendezvous in the park, as usual, next Sunday ; and she and the captain have a very pleasant, quiet day to themselves.

How is it that my lord and my lady are kept in ignorance of the friendship which is springing up between the heir of the house and the poor governess ?

Well, you remember that neither my lord nor my lady were particularly popular with the servants, and Henry Vorian was. He had an open hand—except when there was a question of paying a debt—and though he had not much to give, a little went a long way with the under-paid domestics of the Lacquoigne establishment. As for Alice, she was pretty and polite, and gave little trouble, and her friend Martha gave her a good character ; so nobody made it a duty to tell her ladyship what was occurring under that remarkable feature—her very own aristocratic nose. The housekeeper was the only person who might have laid the information, but she had been left at Beaudechet, which was open to the public now, and must therefore be placed in charge of some one who would look sharply after the fees.

When Marian received Alice's letter, she was a little surprised, but by no means suspected the real reason of her sister's failure to keep the usual appointment. She wrote at once to James, telling him that she would meet him, if he liked, on the following Sunday, at the place where they had encountered each other first.

You may imagine that James Trefusis was delighted enough to receive her letter.

"J. T.," said Charlie Crawhall, who was smoking a pipe with him when the letter arrived, "that missive is from a lady—don't deny it ! And the blush which mantles your

generous cheek as you peruse its contents reveals that you love her, and that the news is good."

James does not answer—is scarcely conscious of his words; but, guessing their import, without raising his eyes from the writing, takes up the tobacco jar, and poises it as if about to launch it at the head of Charlie, who cowers in exaggerated terror, and laughs merrily.

"Good luck to you, Jim," he says presently, when the other has read the letter, folded it up, and placed it in his pocket; "a fellow ought always to love a woman, if he is to be worth anything. It makes him so much better."

"This from you, heretic!"

"Even from me. But why 'heretic'? You never knew me laugh at the true passion. By Heaven, Jim, I think it one of the greatest things in the world—or out of it. My philosophy is exactly expressed in the words—

'For Love is Heaven, and Heaven is Love.'

It is a theory of mine, Jim, that it means all that is contained in the words 'our future state.' I believe that hereafter our happiness or misery will consist simply in the consciousness of how we have loved and been loved. I'd sooner have a few good folk love me—ay, I'd sooner be loved by a dog or a cat—than be a lonely great man of the age. Can you conceive any worse torment for a soul than the knowledge of the love it might have gathered—the affection it slighted? Can you picture a purer happiness than in a community of spirits reposing in the consciousness that they were loving and beloved? And of course in that world the differences of love, which are merely the earthly robes which clothe them here, will be merged in one vast pure emotion."

"A startling creed, Charlie, for some people," said James, who was hardly listening to his friend, so rapt was he in his thoughts of Marian.

"Yes, perhaps. But is not the spirit of Christianity just exactly this? Does not its history point to this? Love—the great key-note of the grandest history ever told—the behest spoken by holy lips that were exceeding loving!"

There was a pause, during which, in the growing darkness, Charlie's pipe burned up and died out fitfully as he puffed at it excitedly. Then he broke silence again, as if he were unconsciously speaking aloud—carrying on a train of thought.

"It is impossible even to believe that the love which dumb creatures bestow on us is lost altogether. Did you ever have a favourite dog, Jim?"

James answered in the negative.

"I had one that lived with me constantly for twelve years, and died of old age in spite of all my care and attention. Nobody knew how that dog loved me. A word from me made her happy for the day ; my step on the stair that led to my chambers woke her from her soundest sleep, and brought her to welcome me at the door. Even when she grew too old to move about much, she would lie and follow me about with her honest, faithful eyes. I can't tell you how I suffered when—when the poor old thing died"—and here Charlie's voice broke. "And do you tell me," he continued, suppressing his emotion, "that this love is lost? I won't believe it."

I think Charlie Crawhall admired and liked James Trefusis more than ever after this discovery. Poor Charlie was a lonely man himself, but he had a little world of love in the affection of his sister's children, who worshipped this simple Bohemian with the fondest and most unchanging fidelity.

Sunday came at last. How slowly that week had gone by, only James Trefusis could tell! And then, as the afternoon bells were chiming, he made his way to the park, and waited for Marian's arrival.

She came punctual to her hour, and looked—for poor, plain Marian—almost pretty, thanks to the flush in her generally pale cheek, and the happy light in her frank grey eyes.

There was no barrier of formality between them now. They were on an equality—both workers, toiling for daily bread—not separated by any fancied distinction of wealth or position.

James drew her hand through his arm ; and so they sauntered off across the sward for a few moments in delighted silence. Neither needed to speak. It was enough that they were near each other, and apart from the world.

Presently, James pressed Marian for a history of what had happened since he left Polvrehan. You may be sure that he was deeply affected at the death of his kind patron, George Carlyon. Marian did not hint at the belief she entertained of the awful truth, that he had committed suicide ; but the sudden striking down of his old generous friend in the prime of life made James's heart ache enough. When Marian told him of Captain Cormack and the sale and mortgage of the property, James ground his teeth, and made a solemn vow to himself that, if it ever lay in his power, he would make than man pay the penalty of his crime to the uttermost farthing!

One might be inclined to think this a little ungrateful to the villain who, unconsciously certainly, but nevertheless most effectually, furthered James's suit. But honest, unselfish James—provided only that he had been able to learn that

those words of Marian's had deceived him as to her opinion of him—would have been content to resign all hope rather than win her by such a reverse of fortune as this. He would have striven and struggled to win her; but it would have been by raising himself, not dragging her down. What were toil and waiting, or any tortures, compared with this woman's love?

Worth how well those dark gray eyes—  
That hair so dark and dear, how worth!  
That a man should strive and agonise,  
And taste a very hell on earth,  
For the hope of such a prize!

When Marian had finished her relation, she asked his story in return. Thereupon, with a certain grim humour, behind which he strove to conceal the bitterness born of disappointment and neglect, he described the invention of his gun, and the disheartening result of his efforts to gain recognition of its merits.

"But," he said, at length, brightening, "it must come at last! There must and will be an alteration in the management of Government business, and then my turn will come. The utter failure of our military arrangements in this Crimean campaign will cause a revolution which may forward my object. All I want is a trial, and I must some day or other get a chance of proving how good the gun is; until then I must be patient. Work and wait—wait and win—that is my motto."

"A courageous one, at least, James. But the knight who carries it on his shield must have a stout heart, or he will fail to carry out its purport."

"My heart has been tried sufficiently. I know what it is to work and wait. I have worked; I have waited: I still wait, Marian."

He lowered his voice a little as he said this, and looked at her earnestly. Did she divine his meaning? Did she know that he was asking her for a presage? I cannot tell. But she too lowered her voice as she spoke.

"Believe in your motto—believe that as you have waited so you shall win!"

How poor James's heart beat at those words! He was about to risk his all now. He was about to speak, and tell his love, and if she rejected it he must lose the little happiness he now possessed—the opportunity of seeing her—of speaking to her—of walking with her. But his heart told him that these words of hers were a favourable omen.

He drew her aside under some trees, to a retired bench.

They sat down for a moment in silence. Neither looked at the other, but by-and-by James, without raising his eyes from his apparently all-absorbing occupation of scratching queer figures in the gravel with the point of his stick, spoke with a low voice.

"I said just now that I knew what it was to wait. Do you know for what I have waited?"

Marian did not answer in words, but shook her head, which action James noted out of the corner of his eye.

"When I was a poor lad in your father's employment, I had one dream that I half feared to entertain; but it was the thing that made life dear to me, and I dared to cling to it. As I grew up, and found that I had been blessed with some little talent that I could turn to good account, the dream seemed to be not utterly impossible of realisation. I strove, and failed; but the failure was not the worst thing I had to bear. Smarting under the bitterness of my disappointment, I returned home, to hear, as I believed, a rebuke to my daring visionary——"

"No, no, James!" Marian broke in, "I know what you mean. Had you heard all, you would have judged otherwise. But what am I saying?"

"Say this much more, Marian. Say that you pardon the presumption of the poor lad who dared to love you—that you do not despise the man whose only hope has been to become worthy of you—who would die to serve you!"

"Yes, yes," she murmured, "it is I who need pardon and pity!"

"Can you love me, Marian?" he asked, drawing himself up now boldly, and taking her hand in his.

"Hush! hush! it must not be! It is you who stoop now—you, the man of science, the successful inventor, who stoop to the poor governess. It must not be."

"I should have dared to ask your love, if my poor first invention had succeeded. Would you have rejected me?"

She shook her head.

"Have pity upon me now. Give me an object to live for; give me strength and new hope to struggle on with."

Poor Marian! But she was obstinate. If she wrung his heart, her own suffered terribly. But she could not dare to believe that this feeling of his was more than generous pity—she could not think love would have survived so long after those fatal words of hers.

Still he pressed his suit, and still though he could see plainly now that his love was returned, she would not speak the few words which were to make him blest indeed.



There was one other obstacle which Marian saw between them. She had not yet told him all about her father. Would he not shrink from the daughter of a suicide? In her despair, in her terror, in her nervous wish to escape further questioning and imploring, she determined to tell James.

"You do not know all," she said; "if I told you, you would shrink from me."

"Never. Tell me what this imaginary terror is."

"Oh, never breathe it to a soul—spare his memory for the kind feelings he had for you. My father committed suicide!"

James was horror-struck. Marian misinterpreted the meaning of his distress.

"I knew you would shrink from me."

"No, indeed. You mistake me; it was grief at the fate of one whom I respected so fondly that unnerved me. But you—oh, Marian, there's nothing in the world—not even your cruelty in withholding your love, that can alter my love for you."

He caught her hand and drew her towards him, so that he could look into her face. He read relenting there.

"Speak, Marian—the one little word—do you love me?"

She sprang up, broke from his grasp, shook his hand, and then, whispering faintly, "Yes, yes!" hurried away, almost ran, leaving him wrapt in the delicious sense of requited love. With a noble instinct, he did not attempt to stop her or follow her. It was enough. She loved him!

What were failure, and disappointment, and delay, now that he was sure of this woman's love? He could toil and wait now, for life could not but be full of calm delight, with that certainty at his heart to whisper comfort and hope in the darkest hour.

That night the hearts of James and Marian were full of peace and thankfulness.

## CHAPTER XX.

## WHEAL CORMACK AND ITS FORTUNES.

WE must not, I think, quite lose sight of the amiable Captain Cormack just yet, for he has a part of some importance to play in our history presently. Besides, James Trefusis, who is not the sort of man to forget a promise, has registered a solemn vow to make the Captain atone some day or other, sooner or later, for the wrongs he has committed. We may be sure of one thing at any rate—namely, that Justice, lame though she be of one foot, is limping after this man to exact her penalty. Whether she will make use of James's hand to accomplish her end, we do not yet know, but we may depend upon it that she will, when her time arrives, claim her prisoner.

In the meantime we will, if you please, take a trip down into Cornwall, and see how the captain thrives on his ill-gotten gains.

He has established himself at Polvrehan, and lives very jollily, seeing plenty of company—for he seems to like any companionship better than solitude now, and generally has a friend or so staying with him.

The beautiful valley is as beautiful as ever. Rella runs blue as of old, beneath the blue sky, and still the green woods and the lush meadows are bright and fragrant. Nature would not curtail her bounty because this man was a villain and a murderer.

The foundry, too, was still busy and prosperous. For of late mining had been looking up in the neighbourhood of Polvrehan, in the West. Several famous lodes had been hit off on the Carndowns, and fortunes had been made in plenty. Wherefore new companies without number were springing up on all sides, and there was no lack of rich adventurers to pour their gold in the yawning shafts, in the wild hope of getting tin and copper brought up in exchange. It was like throwing away sovereigns to catch half-pence, and many of them lost heavily; but just as in battle a fresh man steps forward to fill up the gap where a comrade has just been shot down, so as soon as one man had been squeezed dry, and his last shilling had been flung into the yawning shaft-mouth, up started another to take his place and shed his coin.

It is an ascertained fact that the money yearly invested in

mining speculation is far beyond the profit returned—that, in fact, mining is a dead loss. Yet people will not learn wisdom ; each man lives in hopes of robbing his neighbour, and making the successful hit that must, by the law of statistics, render necessary the bankruptcy of several of his fellows, in order to keep the balance adjusted.

Henry Cormack fattened on the folly of the mine madmen. On many a deserted mine, engines of his building were rusting in the abandoned engine-houses, awaiting the winding-up of the company's affairs. But yet orders for new ones were constantly arriving, and the furnaces were always in full blast, for the old prestige of the firm was still great, and brought Cormack customers. I mention the old prestige purposely, because Cormack was rather injuring than improving the reputation of the business.

How is it that rogues, whom the Devil prospers, so often waste their advantages? Here was Cormack, a penniless adventurer, now raised to a good position, with plenty of money, and an old and well-established business. You would fancy that he would take care, if not to improve, at all events to keep unimpaired the character of the firm. But he did not ; he was seized with that grasping meanness, that greediness for immediate profits, which is the ruin of so many fine undertakings. He was, as the sailors say, losing the ship for want of a ha'porth of pitch.

The men he employed were inferior workmen, the materials he put into his engines were only second-rate, and he lowered his prices to undersell another firm which had lately opened in the same line near Penzance.

The result was that the engines of Carlyon, Cormack, and Co. were by no means in such high repute as in the days when poor drunken George Carlyon looked after the factory.

Some of the engines that had been turned out latterly had been failures, and Cormack had been obliged to patch, and repair, and alter, until they cost him more than he had got for them. But, on the other hand, many were quite good enough to survive the mines for which they were erected, and on these he made a handsome profit.

Since Carlyon's death he had struck up a close friendship with Carlyon's lawyer, whose name did not stand too high for honest dealings. Mr. Creech was a very shrewd old man, who had done many a roguish act in his day. He was much employed on political and mining business, and had great experience in both matters, so that he was sought after for these specialities. He and Cormack got on well together, and did many a sly stroke of business in partnership. It was a curious

thing, that Cormack took great pains to keep the old man in good humour—he was a cranky man in his temper was Creech—and Cormack was not the kind of fellow to spend such trouble unless it were for a profitable purpose. There was a mystery about this, which I hardly think is cleared up by the explanation that the captain required the lawyer's services in the promotion of the long-projected mine on the moors behind Polvrehan. For this scheme was to be worked now. The captain saw how the rage for mining was spreading, and he felt that the time had arrived for setting his little speculation afoot. He, however, had no intention of originating the mine himself. Creech was to get together the company, and Cormack was to give him permission to work the lode on his property. What Creech was to get for his share of the swindle, I cannot say exactly, but it was far more than the magnitude of the work he would have to do entitled him to.

The lawyer knew well how to set about his task. He set some miners out of employment to prospect for ore—that is to say, to see if there were any chance of getting on a rich lode on the moors. He put in command over the prospectors a mine-captain whose occupation was gone, thanks to the utter collapse of the last company he had worked for. You will hardly wonder, then, that before many days elapsed these industrious searchers had found indications of a vein of metal, which the mine-captain—retired, on no pay—did not hesitate to declare the finest he had seen for years. He brought samples with him to Mr. Creech's office, where they were on view for many a long day afterwards—and very fine samples they were. Unluckily, however, the captain, in returning from prospecting, had called in to see an old friend, who was the agent at Wheal Polsneuth, a most prosperous mine, and his friend had given him a few specimens of the ore in the last level driven; and the captain had—inadvertently, of course—put these in the same pocket with his samples from the moors; so that it was possible they got mixed. The prospectors themselves were a little surprised when they saw the samples on Mr. Creech's table, and failed to recognise the stones they had come upon on the moors. Now, as they had taken the trouble, in order to prevent disappointment, to carry the samples with them to the moor in their pockets, they surely ought to have known them again. So, on the whole, I am bound to admit that the captain must have made a mistake.

In plain truth, all these rogues were thinking to outwit one another. They did not dare trust each other, or they could have acted capitally in concert. First of all, there were the working miners, in want of a job, passing off sham samples on

the captain. Then there was the captain, in search of a situation, adding his false specimens to delude Mr. Creech. And finally, there was cunning old Creech, seeing through all their tricks, and playing his own cards. He knew that Henry Cormack would back him up well in this scheme; and that if, after all, they did come on a lucky find, the captain had made his arrangements for their sharing the haul between them. And very possibly old Creech had a nice little plan of his own whereby he intended, if the speculation were a success, to stand in alone for the profits. Diamond cut diamond is a pretty and very interesting game!

The lawyer knew exactly where to lay his hand on the sort of men he wanted for shareholders. So he had printed a nice little map of the "sett," or tract of land to be granted for mining purposes by Cormack, and sent it about to the likely men. The shares were taken up by them like wildfire, and a meeting was held to appoint the officers, and settle the name under which the sett was to be worked.

Mr. Creech was appointed purser; the agent was, as might be expected, that acute man, Captain Tregenna, the discoverer of the encouraging samples. I need hardly mention that the prospecters got work on the mine, which, it was agreed, should be called Wheal Cormack, in honour of the lord of the sett, who was a small shareholder, but a liberal landlord, and invited the company to lunch, where there was a good deal of bad champagne and worse oratory. And so the exploration of the moors beyond Polvrehan was decided upon.

Cormack had not yet become so blindly greedy that he could not see the advisability of sparing the goose which might lay golden eggs. He wanted to foster this scheme, and was really imposed upon by Mr. Creech's fine samples. His intention was to get this mine into a prosperous dividend-paying condition before he took the lion's share of the profits, in order to encourage other adventurers to take setts on his land.

By a strange chance the scheme turned out well. Here had these poor rogues been lying, and cheating, and descending to every possible baseness and meanness, and yet if they had only gone honestly to work they would have found bounteous Mother Nature prepared to reward their efforts. Even from the dishonest point of view, honesty was their best policy, and I will tell you why. Mr. Creech had established an understanding with Captain Tregenna. As soon as the captain discovered any indications of coming fortune, he was to let Mr. Creech know, in order that he might depreciate the shares, and quietly buy up as many of them as possible. But the captain never had a chance of giving the lawyer "the office."

The mine began working with a powerful water-wheel, to turn which they pressed Rella's youthful energies into the service. The shareholders had wanted to have an engine of Cormack, but he generously declined to take the order. He pointed out that they had ample water-power close at hand to enable them to give the new district a fair trial. It would be time enough to put up an engine when their prosperity was sufficient to warrant their sinking another shaft.

Accordingly, the mine was worked by water-power, which is economical, and the captain kept down the wages of his men as low as he could; and so the first turf was cut, and the shaft was sunk, and the top level began to be driven all in due time, and at no very great cost.

It so chanced that community of knavery in the prospecting business bound together some four of the miners who were employed in this top level. One day they got the captain into a talk, and falling on the subject of "tributing," undertook to drive the level a certain length on that system. The captain, setting them down for fools, consented.

"Tributing," I should explain, is a gambling method of working not unpopular among the miners. A certain number of them agree to clear out a certain number of fathoms of the level or gallery of the mine, on the understanding that if they come upon metal they are to receive a pre-arranged percentage on the price at which it sells. On the other hand, if they do not find, they get not a penny for their labour. They are paid for their success, not their work. No wonder that the captain set our adventurous friends down as fools, for entering into a bargain of this sort so soon after the mine was set to work.

He would have altered his opinion possibly if he had seen one of them on the previous day suddenly throw down his pick in the middle of his work, and hurry off to bring his friends and show them the result of his last few strokes. He had hit on the lode—a vein of rich ore, promising, to all appearance, to be very deep and wide. It did not cost such experienced hands very long to efface with mud and water all traces of the lucky strokes of the pick, so that when the captain came on his rounds he found the fortunate finder stolidly chip-chip-chipping at the hard unpromising "back" of the working.

What wheels within wheels of trickery! Diamond cut diamond still being played, you see, fathoms down in the bowels of the earth.

You may imagine the rage of Captain Tregenna when he found how the tributers had got the better of him. You may

picture the disappointment of Mr. Creech when the good news reached him, and the shares in Wheal Cormack went up to fabulous prices. You may guess how savage Cormack was to hear how near the surface the lode lay—he might have worked it himself if he had known it.

Yes, here was a stroke of fortune for all these men, and they were none of them grateful for it. They were disgusted at having an opportunity of making money honestly. They would infinitely have preferred to earn a few extra pounds with infinite trouble and anxiety, and dishonesty. The only people who seemed to enjoy the windfall were the tributers, and their enjoyment was short-lived and dearly purchased. As soon as they had worked out their appointed ground, they took their money and went away, to spend it in a carouse. Unlimited cider and gin, and nothing to do, were doubtless great delights; but when the money was all gone, and they woke up sick and sore and sorry, to find themselves without a penny, and utterly unfit for work, I doubt whether they were inclined to look upon the cutting of the lode in Wheal Cormack as such a subject for congratulation as it had appeared to be at first.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### FROM ONE FEVER TO ANOTHER.

“Is Captain Vorian coming down to breakfast? Will you inquire please, Thomas,” said my lady, as she sat at the table with her aristocratic nose grotesquely exaggerated in the reflection on the round surface of the silver teapot in front of her. The small silver was always in use in the Lacquoigne household, or at least such of it as Mr. Lacking had not found it convenient to leave in charge of the landlord of that noted hostelry, “The Three Bezants.” My lady was acquainted with the fact that silver was by far the most economical ware. Crockery and china are perishable things, and it takes money to replace them; but family plate is everlasting, and only looks the more antique for a few dents and bruises.

So my lady sat at the breakfast table, frowning at her own image on the teapot, in which massive alembic a pinch of “four shilling black” was doing its best to turn an overpowering amount of hot water to a very pale amber, when it would

take the courtesy title of tea, and be poured out for the consumption of the noble family.

"Will you go up and inquire, if you please, Thomas?" said her ladyship.

"Yes, m'leddy," responded Thomas, who was the fullest-fledged footman on the establishment, and therefore on the eve of departure.

His pale pink calves twinkled fitfully between the banisters as he mounted to the young heir's room, knocked at the door, and delivered the noble lady's message.

"Tell my mother I'm feeling very unwell, and shan't be down yet. I shall be glad of a cup here."

My lady raised her eyebrows when she received this answer, and gave orders to have Captain Vorian attended to—poured out for his benefit the first cup of straw-coloured fluid, muddled it with a chalky compound that put itself forward as milk, and made a pretence of sweetening it with a diminutive knob of sugar at which a canary would have turned up its beak in scorn. No doubt, when that unwholesome draught was set before Henry Vorian, he wished himself back at Scutari, where, at all events, the sick appetite was tempted with rich and nourishing things.

By-and-by my lord came up to pay a visit, and was really alarmed at his son's appearance; for the young fellow was looking as white as a girl, though there was a bright spot in either cheek that would have alarmed any experienced eye, but was rather a consolation to my lord, who did not trace fever in the sign.

"Why, my dear boy, you must have the doctor at once. I'll send for Pelligue. It's no good going on like this!"

Now, Dr. Pelligue was one of those fortunate doctors whose skill had gained him—what many unknown practitioners deserved no less—a wide recognition, and a large and profitable practice.

Hitherto our poor nobleman had employed a Mr. Jones, who had qualified in a chemist's shop, and huddled through an examination at Apothecaries' Hall, and who did not at first sight "come expensive," though when you looked over his bill and totted up draughts and pills that never were taken, and would have done no good if they had been, he was by no means so cheap as he looked—even if you credited his side of the account with the sum realised by selling the bottles.

Dr. Pelligue might fairly have declined to attend Henry Vorian. No one knew better than he did that my lord was a poor paymaster. And my lord had no claims on Dr. Pelligue—had never employed him, had never asked him to his house.



The doctor might have left Henry Vorian in the hands of 'Pothecary Jones without in the least causing professional etiquette to moult a feather.

But Dr. Pelligue was one of those medical men whose notions of professional etiquette are modelled after the conduct of a certain Good Physician, who lived some eighteen hundred years or so ago. Though the time-piece on his consulting-room mantelpiece chimed the quarters with a shower of sovereigns and marked the hour with bank-notes to the amount, he would devote all care and attention to the hopeless case of the consumptive girl, whose father was a cabman in that mews round the corner, and from whom he would never take a penny. Take a penny! Whence came the wine and jellies, the only things which the good doctor could prescribe to ease—it was impossible to arrest—the approach of death? And then there was the wife of poor Sawfner, the unrecognised painter, with her broken constitution; or the better half of Koppey, the struggling literary hack, with her rheumatism; or Koppey himself, with an over-worked brain; and a host of patients of a like impecunious order always coming to Pelligue, and tendering the fees screwed out goodness knows how, and always refused by the good man, though by so doing he really lost two guineas—the one he might have taken from his poor patient, and the one he might have taken from a rich one in his or her place.

Pelligue was not the man to refuse to help Harry Vorian out of the hands of fever. He had a catholic sympathy which could feel for a poor nobleman as well as a poor scribe or linner. He refused the fee my lord tendered the first time he attended the captain. And mark how delicately he did it. "No, my lord," he said cheerfully, waving away a little screw of paper: "you and I have sat together at good men's feasts" (my lord had never invited Pelligue to his house), "and I make it a rule not to do anything of this sort. Besides, I have registered a vow at Apothecaries' Hall"—he loved this joke, this noble man—"never to take a penny for attending a Crimean hero. No. I can't do it. I refused to take a fee from Lord—the other day, and he would never forgive me if I showed favour. Good-bye, my lord."

And he stepped into the quiet little brougham that spun off on who can tell how many errands of mercy.

Is this an exaggerated picture? Heaven forbid! There is nothing in this world easier than class depreciation, and funny men have taken a delight in writing down doctors. I grant there are black sheep in the profession as there are everywhere—in the Church even, which is the only profession that I can

consent to think higher than the medical. A strong argument in favour of Apostolical Succession is to be found in the Rev. Mr. Judas, in this day : and there are Dr. Johns to be found in the *Medical Guide*. But then they are only so many proofs of the sublime vitality of the institutions which exist in spite of them. Of all classes of men, literary men who owe so much to doctors should be ashamed to jeer at their benefactors. When I read of the mode in which the "weakminded bird" is treated with a view to the production of *Pâté de Foie Gras*, I always feel that literary men are very like geese—that their sedentary, stimulating work acts on their brains as the fire-side coop acts on the liver of the anserine. And that a man is kept alive, when he is a mere sensorial fungus on a dead trunk, is due to doctors. If we can't be grateful to them, don't let us abuse them.

Thanks to Dr. Pelligue, Henry Vorian was before long in a position to fight off the fever. But he was very weak and nervous. He must be enlivened—kept up ; plenty of nourishing food, and something to keep him cheerful—so said the doctor. And the next day he brought an amusing book, presented to him by its author, a grateful patient. He suggested that somebody should read it aloud to the captain, and wished to press Harriet into the service. But Harriet was not very proficient in the art of reading.

"Well, well ; if you can't, I dare say this young lady can and will," said Pelligue, turning to Alice. He had met them on the stairs outside the school-room, which was converted now into what Harry Vorian called the convalescent ward.

Alice, of course, was ready to make herself useful in any way, and particularly charmed to make herself agreeable to Henry. So she was installed as Scheherazade.

Oh, Doctor Pelligue, little, I hope and trust, did you think what mischief you were making ! Innocently, I most sincerely presume, you put the lighted candle to the cask of powder. And if you are to blame, what are we to say about young Styles, whose novel was of the most fatal tendency ? Of course, all my readers know that now successful author's first book. "*Edith Aglionby, or the Hall and the Hovel*," is a thrilling love tale, which would inculcate the dangerous doctrine that love is really everything, and that ermine and freize always marry and live happily, after an amount of suffering and distress, without which it would be impossible to conduct their loves through three substantial volumes. I must just remind my readers that Edith Aglionby is the daughter of a duke, and her lover is the intellectual son of the head game-keeper ; that he preserves his adored from a mad bull—what a

blessing bovine lunacy has been to us authors!—is taken up on suspicion of murdering his rival—Lord Something-or-other, who was really assassinated by the duke with his own ducal hands, because he was rightful heir to the estate; that he is transported for the crime, in accordance with the laws of "The Novelist's Own Statute Book" for such cases made and provided; that he discovers a large gold tract, and returns to England to find Edith about to be knocked down at St. George's altar to the highest bidder on account of her noble parent's impoverished state, brought on by the necessity for buying off an accomplice after the fact, in the murder of Lord Something-or-other, by an annual sacrifice of about twice his ducal income. When I have recalled thus much, no doubt my readers will be able to fill in the sketch with the rescue of the fair Edith by the mysterious millionaire—with the rescue, the recognition, the repentance, the reunion, and all the other "r's" that are necessary to pull up the story with a resonant rattling rush, amid the riotous rapture of the readers of romances.

Styles may not be flattered to learn that Alice never read as far as the *dénouement*. When they got as far as the love-passages, she and the captain shut the book and acted the remainder. It was only natural that the captain, in his weak state, all the more eager for pity and whatever is related to it, because of his feebleness, mental and bodily, should be very susceptible of the charms of a kind-hearted, pretty girl perpetually hovering about him to perform little acts of tender care which only a woman is capable of. It was natural, too, that when her low, musical voice tremulously spoke the love-passages in Edith Aglionby's place, he should feel very like a young and highly intellectual gamekeeper, and discover an under-current of real feeling beneath the feigned sentiment of the story.

As for Alice, her soft heart and coquettish disposition were both drawing her towards the young and handsome invalid. Her breast was filled with the warmest pity for him—he was so good-looking! He must suffer much—he was so agreeable. It is an inherent inclination of our nature to suppose that lovely things suffer more than ugly or plain ones. We pluck a rose half regretfully—we snap a twig without remorse. We crush a worm—we touch a butterfly daintily. There was, then, nothing very extraordinary in the feeling Alice entertained for the young soldier.

Was it love?

It is a difficult question to answer. Love is a genus with so many underlying species, that it is almost impossible to be

sure of it, or, at all events, to be able to estimate it at its real value. The gamut ranges from the love which is reported to be born in the Irishman, who

Meets with a friend  
And for love knocks him down,

to the intense devotion of the woman whose husband takes his chief exercise and delight in beating and trampling on her, and who yet spares him, and declines to say a word against him in spite of the entreaties and threats of the magistrate.

I can't exactly affix its proper *differentia* or *proprium* to the species of love which Alice felt. I have said, I think, that her nature was not capable of the deep passion which is half of life to some of us.

She certainly pitied Henry Vorian, and pity is akin to love. But that very maxim proves, in the clearest possible way, that pity is not love; and however nearly allied they may be, they are not identical.

If you join two lives, there is oft a scar;  
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;  
One near one is too far.

Nevertheless, love or no love, whatever the emotion was, both Henry and Alice felt satisfied that it was the great, real passion. And so, to the surprise of neither, one day, as Alice had reached the middle of some touching interview between Edith and the intellectual gamekeeper, a something was said or done—a word or a gesture—that broke down the frail barrier between them, and the whole world was forgotten in two brief minutes of love-talk—of suing and pleading, of acknowledging and denying, of mutual vows and confessions, sealed with one long, rapturous kiss. Yes, my dear Mr. Styles, you must take it as a compliment to your powers of writing pathetic love business, that when they reached that celebrated scene in the fir plantation, they shut up the book and finished the story for themselves.

I cannot help thinking that, when the first rapture was over, our young people must have been a little cooled—not to say chilled—by the reflection, "What would my lord and my lady say?"

But Henry Vorian had had very much trouble with debt and poverty, and had always managed somehow "to scrape through," as he called it, until his nature had acquired a marvellous elasticity. He never despaired, and was accustomed to comfort himself with a picture of what might be, a

picture which he touched up, and brightened, and strengthened, until it was all *couleur de rose*.

In this way he talked himself, and Alice too, into a belief that the noble lord his father, and the noble lady his mother, would be only too delighted to learn that their son had given his heart to so lovely, accomplished, and virtuous a girl. He drew a *tableau* of his lordly parent blessing them both, while his ladylike mother looked on with tears of joy coursing down her aristocratic nose.

But in spite of the consolation and hope the pair derived from this mental process of painting, they were not quite so deluded as to be blind to the necessity of keeping their attachment a secret for a little while, until (as the captain said, with the happy philosophy which carried him through so many trials), "something turned up."

I'm afraid Alice was not so constant in keeping up her Sunday afternoon meetings with her sister now; but she never told Marian the reason, and somehow forgot to talk about the captain to her. Marian was too absorbed in her own love affairs to notice this latter omission, though she a little wondered at Alice's frequent absences from the old quiet nook in the park.

You may be sure James Trefusis profited by Alice's frequent absences. He somehow was always loitering about somewhere in the park on Sunday afternoons, and would join Marian as if quite by accident; and then the day would be all the brighter for both of them, and the hours would fly by—oh, so fast!

## CHAPTER XXII.

## WHAT MARIAN CARRIED TO THE HOSPITAL.

TIME passed for both Alice and Marian very pleasantly indeed for a few bright months of early summer. They did not meet every Sunday, it is true ; but when they did not, the one was nursing her interesting invalid, and the other was passing her brief holiday in blissful content with the man whom she loved, yet still regarded with the respect—almost worship—which he as a boy had inspired in her young heart.

Is there anything in the world so delightful as these calm days along the borders of the troubled ocean of passion? We all furl our sails in them at some time or other in the voyage of life. Happy are they who cast anchor in them in the quiet evening of wedded life. These two poor girls were not so blessed now. To-day they linger in the pleasant lagoon, with the velvet sward stretching down to let the lip of the rising tide kiss its verdure. To-morrow, it may be, or the day after, the sea will come roaring in and sweep them out of their peaceful harbour into the ocean of unrest. Do I say it may? It must. Round that stern promontory yonder—like my lady's nose; it is, indeed!—the pretty skiff of Alice's destiny is fated to be whirled, perchance to shipwreck. Nor will Marian's boatload of happiness be suffered to sleep long on the warm sand, with the tide so far away you can just hear its whisper. To none of us, and therefore not to Marian, does the blessed haven reveal itself too soon—always round some frowning headland—until the hand has wearied of tugging at the oar, the eyes of watching the stars, the feet of listless beating in the ballast? Is it hard that it should be so? Not a whit; for who knows the exquisite gust of water save the man who has travelled many a mile athirst? Who values a couch on the soft turf under the beech trees at noonday but the man who has toiled afoot under the blazing sun, over league on league of parched plain? Who knows the true worth of the calm domestic hearth, the pure deep joy of little faces asleep in the cot, of a dear head bending over its sewing as you look across the sacred home altar from your work—a dear head whose every additional silver hair is a golden chain to bind you, whose very evidences of decay make it more precious, like the diminished Sybilline books—who, I say, knows the true worth of these but the man or woman who has toiled, and striven, and struggled? The

inhabitants of Arabia Felix—so said the old travellers—were obliged to burn goat's wool or pitch now and then to make their olfactories duly appreciative of the odorous atmosphere they always breathed, and therefore ceased to estimate. Why should men be so born to bliss that they feel it no more than they do—men of science only know how many—pounds of air pressing on every square inch of their bodies? We must suffer to be able to enjoy. We must work to be able to know what it is to win.

Alice and Marian had yet to learn all this; they had to serve their time to sorrow. Wherefore, ere the sun had quite kissed away all the beauty of the young year, while the undimmed glory of spring yet lived in the country, and even in smoky London some traces of its loveliness yet lingered, there came a change over their lives.

Henry Vorian was rapidly advancing towards a complete recovery. The pain and stiffness of his wounds had gone, and he was full of the rejuvenescence which springs of young love. A pleasant dream was drawing to its close, for the excuses for his delays in the nursery, for his invalid fancies, and Alice's nursing were not tenable for much longer. The time was fast approaching when that vision which he nourished of the approval of his parents was to be tested by stern reality.

In the meantime my lord and my lady, quite unconscious of what was passing, were anxiously desirous of their son's recovery, in order that he might be started for the great Orr prize, the pink-eyed heiress. No trainer ever watched with closer interest the approach of a young race-horse to the requisite form to warrant its starting for some great stake than they watched their son's returning health.

Marian's life was a dull desert, enlivened by those little oases, her Sunday meetings with the man she loved. As for him, having now, by dint of hard labour and some good fortune, attained a considerable distance along his course, he was waiting patiently, lying on his oars until the slow barge of official obstructiveness would clear out of his way enough to let him push on. And that was not to be yet.

He knew the flagstones in Pall Mall intimately by this time. The very sentries had become familiar to him, and the messengers in the hall hardly took the trouble to look up as he passed. The clerks knew him and fled. His face was familiar as the type of a persistent and pertinacious grievance, and they, being quite unable to do anything to redress it, sought refuge in flight. That intricate building, which for the first few visits he believed no man would ever master the geography of, was as simple as a map of Kennington Common.

He had the clue to this labyrinth in the unending story of his wrongs, and went about in the official rabbit warren without fear of being lost, as folks are sometimes lost in the catacombs. Well did Mr. Ledbitter know James Trefusis by this time, and well did every branch, and every clerk in every branch through which his case had passed on its tedious and tortuous way, know the face of James Trefusis.

They came to look upon him at last almost as one of themselves—a permanently appointed waiter on Government. They no longer racked their brains for excuses for delay. "His case was still under consideration." And so James called and called, week after week, on the various people with whom the paper was delayed until they got rid of it in the hopes of getting rid of him. Backwards and forwards, up stairs and down, he pursued that terrible bundle, which was now growing to formidable dimensions. For though he spent much of his time in beating at the doors of official dilatoriness, and was always on the spot to be questioned, the office languidly kept up a long correspondence with him—a long correspondence, which went on slowly revolving like a cyclone, but did not in the least clear the air. The reason of this was that the case was always falling into fresh hands; and the clerk who had to act on James's twenty-fifth letter, put to him some trivial question that had been put some twenty letters back by another clerk, and answered.

At last there came a time which brought a change to the four actors in this part of our story.

One warm summer Sunday, Alice and Marian met, and wandered hand-in-hand under the trees to their favourite seat, looking over the water. There they sat for some time—first in silence, and then talking over trivial things.

At length Alice broke the seal of secrecy which had so long locked up the story of her love.

"Min," she murmured, toying with the fringe of her parasol, and never raising her eyes, "what should you say if my king's son had at last come by?"

"What do you mean, dear?"

Alice did not answer, but she sang in a low voice a verse of the old ballad—

The king his son rode through the street  
Where this fair maiden dwelt;  
At sight of her the heart did leap  
Beneath his jewelled belt.

"Is he a king's son, Alice?" asked Marian, laughingly.

"He is a hero—a prince," said the other, proudly.



"You do not mean that young officer about whom I have so often joked you?"

"Captain Henry Vorian, Marian!"

"Oh, darling, what will come of this? Reflect, my child, what can only come of this to you—shame, disgrace, dishonour!"

"You do not know him, Marian. He is a noble fellow, and loves me as a woman would be loved."

"But this is a clandestine attachment; nothing good can spring of it."

"Every good will spring of it, Min. He is going to tell his father——"

"Worse and worse. To get your instant dismissal."

"Oh, no! He—who knows his parents best—believes they will not oppose him."

"Oh, this is childish dreaming, Alice; this is folly! Tell me how has all this come about."

Thereupon Alice related the whole history of her acquaintance with Henry Vorian—of his illness, and her care; of his love, and her return of affection.

Marian sighed. She had an instinctive terror of what must come of this, for she knew more of the world than Alice did, and was not to be deluded into believing that the Lord and Lady of Lacquoigne would quietly submit to their son's marriage with a penniless governess.

"Alice, darling, there must be an end at once to the clandestine character of this attachment. You must break it off at once unless he tells his parents. Unless he does that, I tell you nothing but evil and mischief can come of it."

"He will tell them in good time."

"The only good time is now."

"Min, you are unreasonable."

"I am not indeed, dearest. It must be decided at once one way or the other. It shall be."

"It shall be?"

"Yes, for I will myself submit to all the pain and misery divulging this to her ladyship rather than allow your name and honour to be imperilled."

"Why, Marian, what has come to you? I never saw you look like this. I never heard you speak so determinedly."

"I have never had such grave reason. Will you promise me that this secrecy shall cease?"

"Oh, Marian, there is no harm in it."

"It is a breach of trust; it is also full of danger to you, which you cannot see nor understand, darling; and therefore I am urgent with you. Do you promise?"

"I will tell Henry all you say."

"Will he do this?"

"I cannot tell."

"You say he is a man of honour, and loves you?"

Alice bowed her head.

"Then he will see this, and obey your slightest wish. You can promise he will?"

"Oh, Marian!"

"Will you promise? He will do it if you ask."

"Well, I promise then. Kiss me."

Marian kissed her very lovingly and tenderly, like a mother. The spoilt child woke in Alice's heart.

"Don't insist, Min. Let it be a little longer. You are so hard with me."

"For your good, child."

"Ah, when you are in love"—and then she noticed a sudden flush burn up in her sister's cheeks—"Why, Marian, has your king's son come, too?"

Marian's answer was a kiss, that said "Yes" plainly.

"Is *he* a king's son?"

"He is a king!" said Marian, proudly.

"Do I know him?"

"Yes; but hush—here comes an old friend of yours."

Alice looked up and saw James Trefusis coming towards them. Marian had told her that she had met with James, but said not a word of the result of that meeting. James had often hovered round the sisters at their trysting hour, waiting to escort Marian homeward, but he had never come up to them, or spoken to them, at Marian's special request. Marian had a half dread of telling Alice where she had given her heart, though she could not explain the cause of the fear even to herself.

It had so happened that in the previous week James had been employed by an engineer, for whom he had done a good deal of work on his first arrival in town, to erect some machinery for a new company. One of the directors was a lord, who was of a mechanical turn of mind, and who, if he had not been encumbered with a coronet, might have made fame and fortune as an engineer. He was much struck with James's keen eye and thorough knowledge of his work, and was good enough to engage him in conversation. Of course no one could converse long with James before he was made acquainted with the gun grievance. And having heard it, my lord volunteered to give James some notes of introduction to various influential members of Government, and most especially to the Secretary at War.

It was to bring her this good news that James ventured to break through Marian's orders.

When Alice saw and recognised him, the mystery of Marian's kingly lover was explained. As a child Marian had worshipped my hero as a king, and Alice divined all.

"Oho! Min, so the king's son is coming indeed. God bless you, dear, and make you happy."

"Hush, child, hush!"

By this time James had reached the place where they were sitting. After shaking hands and chattering a little while with Alice, keeping, nevertheless, his eyes all the time fixed on Marian, he told the story of his meeting with the kind nobleman, and began to indulge in dreams about his gun.

So these three sat talking and dreaming until the hour had come for Alice to return to Mayfair. James, at a look from Marian, offered to accompany her, and she accepted his escort, for she wanted to question him about his attachment to her sister.

When they were gone, Marian sat awhile pondering over what Alice had told her. A vague presentiment of ill hung over her, and now that she was alone, the evening air seemed to grow chill and damp.

She rose and wandered away towards home. As she passed a shrubbery she fancied she heard a low moan. It frightened her—she listened. Then she detected a feeble whimpering, and recognised the voice as that of a child. "Some little thing that has lost its way," she said to herself, as she walked up to the rails, and looked among the shrubs to discover it.

Presently she saw a little girl clothed in rags, lying huddled together under one of the bushes, moaning faintly. The poor little thing was evidently ill. Marian knelt down beside her, and spoke to her kindly. Perhaps such a tone was unfamiliar—it is very possible—but at any rate the child made no answer, only shrank together more, and complained less audibly.

Marian looked round—there was no one in sight. What was to be done? The park-keepers were no doubt deeply absorbed in conversations with the rosy-cheeked servant girls wherewith the park abounds of a summer Sunday evening. She had little time to spare, but she could not leave the poor creature there. She stooped over it as tenderly as possible, and lifted it in her arms. The child was so thin, it was scarcely any weight—and luckily: for poor Marian was far from strong, and was tired enough ere she reached the hospital, which she fortunately remembered was not far from the park.

People who met her in the street stared a little to see so respectable a girl carrying so ragged a child ; but in London everyone is too busy to attend much to such occurrences as this, so that Marian reached the hospital attended only by a few of those ragged urchins who seemed to spring from the ground the moment an accident or anything of the kind happens in London.

As she approached the door of the hospital the Abbey clock struck the hour at which by rights she should have been back at the Orrs'.

There was not a moment to lose. She gave the child to the porter, explained in a few hurried words where and how she had found the little sufferer, and was gone before the astonished functionary had quite recovered his senses.

The child was carried in and put to bed at once, and the house surgeon visited it immediately. When he saw it—he had already been told how it had arrived—he gave a start.

"Good Heavens! Could she have been aware of this?" he muttered, as he hurried away to the porter.

"Where's the woman who brought that child just now?"

"Gone, Sir, as soon as she give it to me."

"Gone! And she did not say anything about what was the matter with it?"

"No, Sir! She said she couldn't make out."

The surgeon hurried back to the little patient's bedside.

"I can't help it; I can't do any more; but I should have liked to see her, and put her on her guard. Here, Jones,—Parker. Let this child be removed at once to ward H, and take away all this bedding. I'm afraid it's a hopeless case."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A FEW MINUTES' CONVERSATION IN THE LIBRARY.

"My own darling Alice!—Thank goodness, those blessed young 'uns are out of the room."

"Fie, you naughty boy! How late you are. They've breakfasted hours ago."

"Oh, yes. I've just done my egg and cup of tea in solitary grandeur: and then rushed up to see you."

And so the young people embraced.

But just as Henry Vorian was pressing one of Alice's golden curls to his lips, there came a tap at the school-room door.

"Come in!" shouted the captain, savagely.

The door opened, and Thomas put his calm visage into the room.

"Please Sir, my lud, Sir, would be 'appy to speak a few words with you in the libery."

"Tell his lordship I'll be there immediately."

Thomas placidly withdrew.

"By Jove, rather a narrow escape!" said Henry Vorian, as the footman disappeared.

The two lovers were, you may be certain, a little disturbed at this summons. They imagined at once that their secret had been discovered. And although they had determined to reveal it themselves some day, they felt that being found out instead of making a confession was likely to tell against them.

They looked foolish enough, poor things! When you thrust aside the ivy and peep into the snug nest that has been so closely concealed all the spring, the chicks blink and open their beaks, and look the most idiotic of bipeds. And just in this way the little unfledged loves in the human heart, if they be rudely discovered ere their pen-feathers have made their appearance, are apt to seem a little silly.

The evening of the Sunday before this eventful morning James Trefusis had escorted Alice home, and had told her all his love for her sister. She had listened with the greater interest (though perhaps not with the greater patience), because it would enable her to confide her own little affection to him. It is astonishing—for what is called a shy and retiring passion—how much Love tends to make its victims garrulous. If you have a taciturn friend, you can set him

babbling in a minute by pulling out the affection-stop of that hitherto mute organ—his heart.

Alice then had listened to James's story with eager attention—the eagerness due rather to her anxiety for him to bring his story to an end than from any doubt of how it would end.

And when he had finished his revelation, she told him the tale of her attachment. He listened to it as a brother should listen to such a recital from a sister, and he looked very grave; for he, like Marian, saw what might be the result of the unfortunate difference between Alice and Henry Vorian. With some timidity, for he had not quite shaken off towards the younger sister as he had towards the elder, thanks to that splendid republican, Love,—the feeling of inferiority of birth and position which was the heritage of his youth—with some timidity and no small difficulty, never having had sisters of his own to advise, he impressed on Alice the same counsel which Marian had given her, and entreated her to follow it.

“Let there be no concealment; better separation than shame; better despair than disgrace”—such was the moral honest James tried nervously, and with much hesitation of speech, to urge upon Alice.

But in spite of the nervousness and hesitation, there was so much unmistakable earnestness in his advice, that Alice was persuaded that he and Marian must be right. She made up her mind, therefore, to implore her lover, when she saw him again, to reveal their attachment to his father.

Unfortunately, Henry Vorian was away for a day or two, and when he did return, on the Wednesday night, was so tired that he was not visible till late on Thursday. He had been at Mr. Orr's country house, where Mrs. and Miss Orr had spent a week to entertain him. How hard he had tried to beg off the infliction, I need not tell you. But he was getting better and stronger now, and the doctor had given directions—as unwitting of the mischief he was doing in this case as when he prescribed Alice's reading—that he should be taken out, and enlivened. He was “worrying about something or another, that was clear, and wanted rousing.”

My lady, therefore, for this and other reasons, had insisted on her son's going to the Orrs'. As for my lord, he had no idea of a man's suffering anxiety—or, as the doctor called it, worrying himself—about a love affair. The only thing he could think of as likely to trouble him was money.

This shrewd nobleman never inquired about his son's pecuniary position, for fear he should be invited to help him out of difficulties. With a vivid recollection of his own youth,

he avoided asking any questions about Henry's doings : though I doubt not, as he looked at the young fellow's careful face across the table at breakfast, he calculated how many *post obits* had taxed his son's filial affection.

With no idea of any other thorn in the side save straitened means. Lord Lacquoigne came to the opinion that Henry had got over head and ears in debt. The next question was how to extricate him—of course without paying for him, if possible.

Naturally, the first scheme which presented itself to the not over-brilliant mental powers of the nobleman was a wealthy marriage. And from the notion of the marriage to the idea of the marriage with Miss Orr was so easy a step, that my lord was hardly exhausted even then by the intellectual effort, but had enough energy left to make up his mind to send for his son and suggest this ingenious plan to him.

Accordingly, Thomas was summoned to the "library," and bidden to ask Captain Vorian to be good enough to give his father a few minutes conversation.

How Thomas arrived just as the lovers met after their short separation, and just as Alice was about to tell Henry to inform his parents of their attachment, my readers know.

When Henry Vorian talked about "a narrow escape," he applied the term to himself and Alice. It would have better suited the astute Thomas. For that worthy, on reaching the school-room, had applied his eye to the keyhole ere he applied his knuckles to the panel ; and in consequence of seeing the affectionate terms on which the captain and the governess were, he had delayed the latter operation somewhat. "The narrow escape," then, was his ; for had Henry Vorian chanced to catch him at his interesting occupation, he would certainly, with his sound leg, have kicked him so thoroughly down stairs, that his descent would probably have only concluded on the mat in the hall.

I'm not sure—and never shall be—whether the convenience of having some one to brush your clothes, black your shoes, and cook your dinner, can ever quite repay you for the constant surveillance exercised over you by your so-called servants. It is not that one does anything criminal, but there are so many, many things—little economics, passing pressures, domestic differences, and family troubles—which one would rather go through without spectators, and especially without such indifferent and incapable critics. Every man acts a domestic drama—only, instead of going on the stage and letting the public pay him, he hires audiences at terms varying from nine to fifty pounds per annum, according to their position—whether

they go into the gallery or pit as kitchenmaids and housemaids, or take a private bin—I mean box—as butler.

Thomas went down into the kitchen—my lady always spoke of it as “the servants’ hall”—and described what he had seen, illustrating his meaning by putting his arm round the housemaid’s waist and attempting to kiss her, a liberty which she resented, not so much because she objected to it, as that Thomas being on the eve of departure, it was as well to be “off” with him, in accordance with the old maxim, in order to be better prepared to be “on with the new” footman.

I have been digressing somewhat. But you must please to consider the digressions as artistic—descriptive music, in short, indicating the hesitation with which Henry Vorian descended to the library to this dreaded interview with his noble father.

On entering the room, however, he was rather relieved to find his father unusually agreeable.

“Sit down, Harry; sit down. How are you? Better I can see; but not well, eh?”

The captain admitted that there had been periods of his existence when his health had been less a source of anxiety.

“Ah, I can see! Fact is, my dear boy, you are worrying. The doctor says so; and you know, Pelligue is the deuce and all to find out what’s the matter. Bless you, he told me the other day that he was attending Lady Someone—wouldn’t tell her name for worlds. She had baffled all the best men of the day—couldn’t find out what was the matter, not they! Egad, the first time he saw her he twigged it. The old girl was given to drink. She couldn’t take spirits, because of the servants; so what do you think she did? Got quietly screwed of a night with Eau de Cologne. She did, by Jove; and he guessed it. Clever beggar, that Pelligue!”

Henry Vorian smiled in a somewhat sickly manner, not having quite recovered his spirits yet, and said “he at all events was not ill on that account. He didn’t take Eau de Cologne.”

“No, no! Of course not,” said my lord, quite lively and pleasant at the notion of having told a funny story well. “It’s another sort of ‘owe’ with you;” and then he laughed consumedly. “Egad—do you see it? Doosed good, by Jove. I must remember that; it would do for *Punch*. I’ll tell some of those literary fellows one meets at Lady Fubsby’s, and tell ’em to put it in.”

Henry Vorian laughed, but his laugh was no more successful than his smile.

“Well, Harry, when a good-looking, well-born young fellow like you gets a little hard up, he must marry.”



Henry murmured his assent, not in the least expecting what was coming next.

"You young fellows nowadays have infinite advantages over us old fellows—I mean over what we old fellows had in our days. Dooose a bit of finding out then what a girl was really worth—not a bit of it. But now you've only to keep your eyes about you, and what with the 'wills and bequests' in the *London News* and the papers generally, it is uncommonly hard if a fellow who is looking out for that sort of thing can't find which girl is best worth keeping an eye on. I need hardly tell you, Henry," his lordship said, becoming serious all at once at the recollection, "that when I married your mother I supposed she was considerably better off than she was. Don't you do the same thing!"

His lordship paused for a moment, as if expecting his son to make the most solemn promises to obey him; but Henry had no such intention, although, strictly speaking, he might have done so with perfect safety, because my lord, being a nobleman, was not called on to be grammatical, and had merely required of his son—in so many words—not to marry his mother!

As, however, Henry did not speak, his father continued in a grave voice.

"I feel quite sure, although I have not asked you, and do not intend to—pray understand that—I have no intention to invite your confidence in the matter"—he was dreadfully afraid his son would tell him all, and ask his aid,—“but I feel quite sure you are heavily involved in debt. You must be perfectly aware that I cannot assist. I have your brothers and sisters to provide for, while you will have the title and estates. You must see that I have enough to do to look after their interests; and that anxiety”—here my lord's brow became knitted—“is no mean one, for the hope I once entertained of obtaining the boys some Government appointments is daily growing less promising, thanks to those confounded Radicals, and the ridiculous 'retrenchment and reform' mania. Egad, before long there will be nothing for a poor nobleman to do with his sons!”

The captain declared this was too bad.

"Too bad! I think it's cursed revolutionary! But it can't be helped; so you must not look to me for aid. What's to be done, then?"

The heir shook his head.

"I'll tell you, Henry. You must look about you for some girl with a lot of money. Have you thought of this?"

Henry shook his head despondingly.

"Hang it, Sir!" said his father, "then you should have done so. What the doose is the good of asking the Orrs here—

giving these confoundedly expensive dinners to that uneducated old beast, if you can't see that it is to give you an opportunity of making up to his daughter?"

Poor Henry Vorian was completely dumb-founded at this startling revelation. He mumbled out something about being "much obliged—grateful. Fact was—Miss Carlyle—charming girl—admired her."

"What the doose has that to do with me, Sir? Though, hang it, you might as well keep from paying attentions to one's own servants. Hang it all; boys will be boys, and young men young men. That is no consequence in the world; only we must get rid of her. These sort of things, you know, don't do in one's own house, dash it."

"You mistake me," said Henry Vorian, speaking quite clearly and distinctly now, aroused by his father's mode of speaking of his attachment; "the love I entertain for Miss Carlyle is honourable, if hitherto it has been concealed from you, Sir. That lady is to be my wife, and therefore I shall feel obliged if you will speak of her with respect."

Lord Lacquoigne was horror-struck. The son had never had the audacity to turn in this way before, and as he stood panting, half with fear, half with rage, he terrified his father; but my lord was blessed with some presence of mind, and to conceal his alarm he began to bluster.

"Curse me, Sir! what do you mean? Have you been such an idiotic fool that you have laid your name and your debts at the feet of that common penniless little devil? Confound her doll face! I said to my lady she was too doocedly pretty, and thought if you were at home you might be tempted to play the fool; but, by Jove, Sir, the idea of this insane, disobedient, blackguardly conduct exceeds everything. What the doose will your mother say, Sir, do you think?"

Henry ventured to hope that his mother would rather learn that her son was an honourable man than a villain.

"Villain be hanged, Sir! Is it honourable to pay your addresses to your mother's governess on the sly, and offer to marry her without your parents' consent? Get out of my sight, you low, unworthy fellow! Get out! Go away—only, by Jove, Sir, if you go near that infernal school-room, where that designing little devil is, I'll have you and her both turned out of the house neck and crop. Don't answer me, Sir! Hold your tongue. Go to your own room, and don't let me see you until you have recovered your senses."

And my lord looked so much as if he himself were out of his senses, and gnashed his teeth so furiously, that Henry was glad enough to slip out of the room and sneak up stairs; and

he hadn't the courage to brave his father's anger by going to the school-room, although he knew that Alice would be dying to hear what had passed between them. So he sat down and wrote a letter to her, which he took out and posted. It contained a short, passionate description of his father's treatment of him, and a warm avowal of his unchanged and unchangeable affection for her. Finally, he said, to prove that he fully intended to keep his word, he recorded therein, in black and white, his promise to marry her; and bade her, if ever he swerved from his honest purpose, make any use she chose of that testimony to punish him and his family.

When Henry left the room, my lord rang the bell, and told Thomas to inform her ladyship that her presence was required in the library. Her ladyship accordingly came rustling down in a very old brown silk dress from her "boudoir," where she was superintending a couple of very overworked and underpaid needlewomen, whom she employed to work for her in order to save on her milliner's bill. She made a point of superintending their labours in person for fear they should idle and talk.

You may readily imagine what my lady said and how she looked when the noble lord told her of her son's doings and intentions. Her eyes got as hard and cruel as a pair of red-hot pincers, and her nose (that aristocratic organ would have turned up in scorn at the notion of her son's marrying a common governess, had it been capable of such vulgarity) got so sharp, it seemed as if it must cleave through the integument stretched over its bony ridge.

She was not two minutes in deciding on the right course to pursue. Henry was confined to his room by my lord's orders, and the governess must be dismissed. Unluckily the governess was entitled to a quarter's notice or a quarter's salary. Notice was out of the question, and the salary was not forthcoming. What was to be done? My lord must go off instantan to Mr. Scrooby, his lawyer, and get a loan from him. In the meantime she would keep strict watch on Henry, and prevent him from seeing or communicating with Alice, who was to be sent off the very moment my lord returned from the City. It so happened, however, that Mr. Scrooby was not in when my lord arrived at his office, so the money was not procurable. But his lordship left him a note requesting him to send it the first thing in the morning.

That night two people slept ill in that house—Henry Vorian, and Alice, who could not understand why she had not seen her lover. My lord and my lady, as became people with good consciences, slumbered calmly!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### HOW THE TREFUSIS GUN NEARLY WENT OFF.

"HANG it all, captain," said James one morning, springing up from his seat by the window, whence he had watched the postman, and seen him pass the door without delivering the long-expected official missive; "hang it all! I can't stand this any longer. I'll go and wake up the Seven Sleepers at the Ordnance Office."

"Humph! You won't get much by it," growled the old soldier, who was poring over a new treatise on artillery.

"It will let off the steam, at any rate."

Accordingly, James once more visited the Ordnance Office. He had not been there for some time, and had almost passed from the official memory.

As he entered the hall, it suddenly occurred to him that he had left all the correspondence on the subject of his gun behind him at his lodgings. He paused, wondering whether it would be any use to attempt to bring the official mind to a recognition of him without these credentials. A messenger, of magnificent appearance, probably ex-valet of some past Secretary of State, stepped forward condescendingly.

"Do you wish to see anyone, Sir?"

"Yes," James answered, hardly knowing what he answered, for he was still debating within himself.

"Is it one of the clerks, Sir, or one of the gentlemen in the hall?" asked the other, meaning, by that last elegant periphrasis, the messengers.

James explained that he knew where to go, and whom to see; whereupon the man, with just a flavour of offended dignity, returned to his *Times*.

"Well! In for a penny in for a pound—I've come so far, so I'll just go and chance it," said James to himself, and so he wound his devious way to Mr. Ledbitter's room, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," roared the occupant, emphatically; whereupon James entered. Mr. Ledbitter was sitting astride a chair, with his arms on the back, another chair opposite to him being occupied in a similar manner by a highly attired swell, with a geranium in his button-hole and the knob of his cane in his mouth. Mr. Ledbitter bade James be seated, indicating a

chair on the other side of the room, and continued his conversation with the sucking swell.

At first James supposed this conversation was of a business nature, and was rather astonished at the free and easy position in which it was being discussed. Presently, however, Mr. Ledbitter, unconsciously raising his voice above the low tone in which he talked when first James came in, began to become audible.

——“As for Jack Simpson, he took a little more cold fowl than was good for him, I should say, for he ‘went on dreffle’ with the eldest of the Piminy girls. You know ‘em, don’t you? Mother designing old gal; father a half-pay Indian officer; was in the Company’s Artillery, I think—girls rather nice, but always on the hook. Gad, I guess Master Jack has got a barb in his gills; he’ll have the old chap after him before long—ask intentions. Law bless you! pistols in a moment, if Jack cries off at all—trifling—daughters of an old soldier, Sir—held a commission—served country—all that sort of thing, eh? Well, coming back, Tom Fitzgerald, who can’t drive a bit, got on the box-seat, and he and the driver both being just nicely screwed, he persuaded the chap to let him take the ribbons. Hadn’t gone far—just turn of the road—well, you know where the open green is, before you come to those tall houses. About a hundred yards this side of that, where the ditch crosses the road—you know. Well, just there, turned too sharp—over we go—regular smash. Had to get a farmer somewhere near to let us put the horses into a couple of his carts, and take the girls home—doosid jolly. Old people as crusty as thirty-four port, and Laura Danson with a sprained ankle—couldn’t waltz for weeks. Doosid stoopid of Fitzgerald, wasn’t it? Just like those confounded Irish.”

In this amusing strain Mr. Ledbitter flowed on for about a quarter of an hour, when his friend, who had been suppressing yawns in the crown of his hat for some time past, suddenly recollected that he had a pressing engagement, and took advantage of a semicolon in Mr. L.’s long-winded narrative to cut it short, and take his leave.

Mr. Ledbitter then awoke to the fact of James’s presence. He made no apology for keeping him, and was by no means amiable, having no doubt been a little put out by his friend’s abrupt suppression of the rest of his anecdote. I think, for one short minute, he had half a mind to finish his story to James, but the idea was immediately quelled.

“Well, what can I do for you, Sir?”

“I have called about that gun, Sir——”

“Gun!—gun!—what gun?”

"I think you will remember ; I saw you about three weeks ago on the subject."

"Are you quite sure it was me?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly ; I came here first while you had my case under consideration, and have been several times since."

"Oh, what is it about?"

"About a newly-invented gun."

"Ah, yes. To be sure. Mr. Clarkson? Yes, yes, of course. Well, your case is still under consideration."

"My name is not Clarkson—it is Trefusis."

"Yes, exactly, that was what I meant. Your case will not be decided just yet. You see, the fact is, we cannot ascertain whether anyone had pointed out that flaw in the gun when it was delivered. Now it has——"

"I think you must be speaking of another application. I merely sent the drawings and specifications of a newly invented mode of rifling."

"Now, who could have sent you here, then? That's nothing to do with me. You should have been sent to Mr. Sanders."

James explained that he had had several interviews already with Mr. Ledbitter on the subject, in whose hands he had actually seen the papers.

"Oh, yes, to be sure. But that's all altered now. That sort of work has been taken from this branch, and is Mr. Sanders's business now. Look here. You'd better go and see Sanders."

James made a futile attempt to recall his case to Mr. Ledbitter's recollection, and learn the latest steps taken. But that gentleman having been put on fresh work, his mind was like a clean slate, without a trace of his late labours on it.

Without much difficulty James made his way to Mr. Sanders's room, and knocked at the door. No answer. He knocked again still louder. Still no answer. At a third smart tap, however, an angry voice told him to "come in." He found a little grey-headed gentleman sitting in an easy chair, reading the paper. The little gentleman had a red face, and apparently a ready temper, for he snapped out something about "keeping on tapping," and "we don't sit in our shirt sleeves," and "why can't you come in at once, instead of tap-tap-tapping, like a cursed woodpecker?"

James laid his case before Mr. Sanders, and begged that gentleman to tell him what was being done. That gentleman was evidently a mere Civil Service shepherd, who looked after a select flock of clerks and did nothing. He told James he could give him no assistance, but Mr. Tattifer, in the next room but one, might help him.

Mr. Tattifer's room having been discovered, James acted on

the experience he had acquired of Mr. Sanders, and walked into the room without knocking. The looks he met with were not of a kind calculated to encourage an attempt to repeat the manœuvre. Two gentlemen were looking out of a window into the street, commenting, no doubt, on the wealth and fashion rolling by. A third was reading *Punch*, with his feet gracefully stuck up, Yankee fashion, on his desk. A fourth was washing his hands and preparing to go out for a little stroll, with which view he had a little nosegay for his button-hole refreshing itself in an inkstand glass filled with water. When James entered there was a general scuttle to places—terribly undignified, but the young men were under the impression that it was Mr. Sanders who was coming to pay them a visit.

Mr. Tattifer having brought his heels to their normal state of being lower than his head, laid *Punch* aside, and asked James his business, in a stern and rather ill-tempered voice. James once more explained his errand. Mr. Tattifer asked Mr. Spring to step this way. Mr. Spring had been one of those James found looking on the outer world through the plate-glass. He dispensed a stale fragrance of tobacco smoke, which appeared to have penetrated his brain, so foggy was he.

"Oh, ah. Well, the ah—gun, you see. The ah—fact is that"—here he looked up at the ceiling, knitting his brows in search, perhaps, of the rest of the sentence, which was not forthcoming, however. "The—the—ah—Lord Parmenter—the—ah—Under-Secretary was—ah. The case was—ah—still under consideration."

Could Mr. Spring inform James how far the case had got?

"Have you made yourself thoroughly master of it, Mr. Spring?" chimed in Mr. Tattifer, who seemed a little afraid that his subordinate might commit himself.

"Why, the—ah. Mr. Smith—ah. That is—ah. The Inspector of guns—ah—of ordnance. Ah—Inspector of Ordnance—had—ah—reported upon—had—ah—recommended its trial."

James was delighted. How soon would he be informed of this officially? Mr. Spring and Mr. Tattifer both opened their eyes languidly, and stared at him. The former gentleman said that it was quite possible that the higher authorities would disagree with the Inspector's opinions. "What would be done, then?" Oh, the Inspector would probably have the papers back and would withdraw the suggestion. "Had Mr. Spring the papers by him?" Mr. Spring was quite unable to say. He had had them at some time or other, but found it quite impossible to fix a date. Finally, by a reference to the book, of which, in the absence of the young gentleman who had gone

to take his geranium for a stroll, the combined efforts of the remaining clerks were barely successful in making anything, it was discovered that the papers had been sent to the Private Secretary that morning.

James determined to put a bold face on it, and go to the Private Secretary direct. Accordingly, after a little searching, and no slight risk of losing himself, he at length made his way to a small but very comfortable apartment, where a young gentleman, who turned out to be the Private Secretary, was busily employed in writing letters. Probably owing to his having so much intercourse with the outer world, he was far more agreeable and communicative than any of the other officials with whom James had come into contact.

After a few fruitless plunges into a basket full of big bundles of official papers, the Private Secretary at last succeeded in finding those connected with James's invention. As he turned them over, James caught sight of a note from his friend, my lord the Director. It was dated a few days back; and James saw on the paper—with the same date—a minute which, to judge from the letters on which he was engaged, had been written by the Private Secretary. The minute was short, and to the purpose :—

I. of O.

The Secretary of State wishes to have this case reported upon immediately.

CHARLES VERE.

The effect of the noble Director's note was evident. The Secretary of State had nudged the Private Secretary, the Private Secretary had nudged the Inspector of Ordnance, the Inspector of Ordnance had nudged the Assistant Inspector of Ordnance, and the Assistant Inspector of Ordnance had nudged the clerks under him; and so they all woke up for about the space of an hour, and James's case made more progress in that time than it had done in a whole year before.

The Private Secretary—become, if possible, more civil and obliging since his perusal of my lord's letter—explained to James that if the Inspector's report were acted upon, he (James Trefusis) would be expected to supply a certain number of guns, and pay all the expenses of the experiment.

This was not very encouraging; but still it was something to obtain even thus much. James thanked the Private Secretary, and hurried off home, where he made the best of it—though how he was to get the money to pay for all this was a question he could not solve. But he put a good face on the matter, and roasted the old captain unmercifully about his prophecy of the everlasting non-recognition of the invention.



"Wait and see," said the old gentleman; "wait and see. There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

"And many a one 'twixt success and the gun," rhymed Charlie Crawlhall, who had dropped in.

But James only laughed, and called them a brace of croakers.

The next morning but one, however, there arrived a long official envelope, with the superscription, "On Her Majesty's Service." James opened it and began to read the letter eagerly. But he had not gone far ere a blank expression came over his face, which told the old captain that something had gone wrong.

The writer of the letter (signature illegible, as before) was directed (as usual) to state that the plan for rifling ordnance on a new principle had been submitted in the proper quarter, and that, he regretted to add, it could not be entertained.

This was so very different from what James had been led to expect, that he was utterly dumbfounded. He did not know what on earth to do. Finally he went off to his friend, "the noble Director," and laid the case before him. His lordship explained it all in a few minutes.

Some fortunate inventor, who was blessed with a four-hundred horse power of earwigging, had managed to get his little scheme decided on without any examination of its merits in comparison with those of other new guns. He had so many friends in high quarters that it was impossible for anyone to make a better gun; and accordingly it was promulgated officially that all other schemes were to be knocked on the head instantane.

"But what will be the end of this?" asked James. "They must find out he is not the best man some day or other."

"Oh," said his friend, "then they'll knight him, or something of that sort; and perhaps they may leave off making his guns, or perhaps they mayn't. Anyhow, the rival who explodes his pretensions won't benefit by it. So, don't try it, Mr. Trefusis."

And Mr. Trefusis didn't try it.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## WHAT MARIAN BROUGHT BACK FROM THE HOSPITAL.

WHEN she had left the poor little waif at the hospital, Marian had to hurry away as fast as she could to Grosvenor Place. Luckily Mrs. Orr was in the country, so a few minutes did not matter particularly; but she dreaded being very late even in that lady's absence, because Mrs. Pincher was certain to report her failure in punctuality.

It was a sultry, heavy day, with occasional big drops—"the pride of the morning," as they call such intermittent rain in the country. Every now and then the sun came out, but it was with a pale watery gleam, as if the heat were too great even for him.

Poor Marian, hastening home, became very warm, what with nervousness and what with hurry, and was almost ready to faint when she reached the inhospitable door of the Orr mansion. She was admitted, under protest, by one of the canary coloured footmen, who seemed to think that a governess, like the milk, ought to come through the area, if not through a hole in the pavement, like the coals.

Holding firmly by the banisters, Marian mounted her social treadmill of innumerable stairs, and climbed painfully to her nursery. She was very weary long ere she reached the top, and could have seated herself halfway, and fallen asleep with intense relief; but she strung up her nerves and toiled on. By a strong effort of will she compelled herself to walk with a show of firmness into the nursery, and take her usual seat at the table.

It was the fashion of the Orrs to make every one of the household feel, as much as possible, that the seventh day of the week was Sunday—and by Sunday I don't mean you to understand a day of rest. Mrs. Orr was accustomed, it is true, to speak of the day as one of rest; but it was nothing of the sort. Was it rest to Mr. Orr, who was comfortable enough washing his hands in gold in his office in the City, but nothing of the sort when sitting up in state receiving visitors on Sunday afternoons? As for the servants, they were set to eat up all the old scraps—on religious grounds. Although it was "a work of necessity" that Mr. and Mrs. Orr should have a hot dinner, it would have been a grievous sin to have one in the

kitchen. And there were callers, and much going to church so that Sunday was no holiday for the Orr domestics.

The children, although they were less children than living miniatures of their parents, were not inclined to regard Sunday as a day of rest, for they had an extra allowance of catechism, collect, and hymn to learn, and the only recreation they were allowed to indulge in was the perusal of tracts and those dreariest of all dreary things, "good books"—so good that they were never seen except once a week. What a funny notion it is that people like the Orrs have. They think because a book is good, it must never be read except on Sunday; but then, to be sure, the class of publications to which they award the epithet is so peculiar that it would have no chance of perusal at all, except on a day when every other kind of reading is strictly prohibited, and studious people become the Robinson Crusoes of literature, ready to devour anything they can pick up.

In accordance with the laws of the house, the children had had heavy lessons set them, which were not considered work, as being of a religious character. They were to say them to Marian in the afternoon, and she ought to have been prepared to hear them now, as soon as she came back. With this intention she took her usual seat at the table, and called Algernon and Alicia to her.

"Do you know, Miss Carlyle," said Algernon, who had been counting his money in the corner, and was cross at being disturbed in that high-minded amusement, "do you know it's half an hour after the proper time?"

"Yes, my dear," said Marian quietly.

"Ah, well, mamma would not like your stopping out——"

"Just because her back is turned," said the amiable Alicia, *sotto voce*.

Marian was not one to allow her pupils to be impudent. She checked Master Algernon smartly, and administered a severe lecture to him and his sister, to which they listened with stolid indifference—Algernon with one hand in his pocket, counting his wealth furtively.

There was a terrible aching in poor Marian's head, and she felt very confused, so that Alicia and Algernon had rather a fine time of it, confounding their "duty towards their neighbour" with what their godfathers and godmothers did promise in their name in a way that would have edified their governess, had she been conscious of it.

How delighted she was when the weary lessons were done, and the children had their suppers, of bread and milk, and retired to bed, after an animated discussion as to whether the

little Todmordens, with whom they had played in the park on the last Saturday afternoon, had a papa as rich as their papa, and whether the Todmordens' mamma had as many dresses and as much jewellery as their mamma. Dear children!

"I shall tell ma about Miss Carlyle's stopping out so long, Lizzy. Shan't you?" said Algernon, that amiable boy.

"Oh, yes! and how she heard us our lessons. I said the hymn that I learnt last Sunday, and she didn't know it again," said the delighted Alicia.

"Look here, Alicia—I'll give you my fourpenny-piece if you'll let me tell ma first. You may tell Mrs. Pincher if you like—but you must give me a penny back if you do."

"Oh, yes! and ma'll give you sixpence for being a good boy, and I shall only get a piece of bread and jam from Pincher."

"Well, if ma does give me sixpence, I'll give you a penny more. There!" said the very son of Mr. Orr. And so the bargain was struck, for these nice young people were educated by their mother to keep up a system of *espionage* on all the household, and were rewarded for telling tales; wherefore the businesslike brats made their bargains, and even, when in want of a little money, laid their heads together to invent little stories, which, by dint of supporting one another in the details, they contrived to pass off as real. It was in so many words a forgery. They were signing Truth's name to cheques for the small sum of sixpence. It was the result of their education, if not of their parentage.

What would Mr. Orr have said had he found his son guilty of such conduct—of forgery, flat forgery?

Well, I really cannot say. But, mind, this is to be regarded as a privileged communication.

When the delightful children were gone to bed, Marian flung up the nursery window, and sat by it in the hope of finding cool comfort in the night-breeze. The day, as I have told you, had been one of the quiet sweltering days, when human nature is fit for little save being bottled off, and put away in cool bins. The night was as dense and dull and oppressive as the day. The lurid light of the great city seemed to steam up into the sky, and make the night yet closer and heavier.

Marian leant her aching brow on the window-sill, and prayed for relief. A fearful weight seemed pressing on her brain, and invisible fetters loaded her limbs. She had not even strength and energy enough to wipe away the big burning tears that overflowed her lids, and dropped, searing, down her cheeks.

The end of candle in the candlestick burnt down, flared, and died away; and Marian watched it, too feeble and sick and weary to care about it, though it would oblige her to go to bed in the dark—Mrs. Pincher doling out only a modicum of tallow to each of the servants—including Miss Carlyle, the governess, among them.

There was nothing in the shape of light left save the quaint parallelogram flung on the dark ceiling by the gas lamp in the street below. It seemed to her eyes, dim with pain and haunted with feverish fancies, a great golden board whereon the future was written in a strange heiroglyphic which she could not decipher. Slowly, by degrees, it grew more and more intense, and seemed to come nearer and nearer. It made her nervous. So, after a while, she rose, made her way to her room, and went to bed.

The sultry night accomplished its destiny. When Marian had closed her eyes—which was not until such time as her aching brain began to confuse the sights and sounds of the midnight with her feverish waking dreams, so that she lay for a time in a species of swoon between reality and sleep—there flashed across the thick curtain of night a faint blue gleam. A low murmur followed, like a great lion rousing from his slumber. In another minute a second flash followed—this time writing with rapid hand a lurid izzard on the black sky. And then came the voice of the nearer monster. Before long, with a hiss like an advancing army of serpents, the veil of rain—rapid, heavy and continuous—swept up from the distance. Loud lashed its pelting showers against the pane. But louder now the unmistakable thunder growled and echoed. Furiously the blue lightning zigzagged, like fiery serpents, across the inky vault.

It was a terrific storm. The oppressive lull of the evening had heralded it fitly. It was as fierce and fast and furious as its precursor was dull and dense and depressing.

It did not wake Marian, however. But its voice reached her sleeping ear, and mingled with her dreams.

She dreamt she was in a little rudderless boat, adrift on the vast Atlantic that tumbles in on the inhospitable coast of Bude. As a child she had spent some weeks on the north coast of Cornwall, and its rugged majestic scenery rose before her again now. Backward and forward on the breakers that beat on the shore the little boat rocked and tossed. Now it was poised on the crest of some tall combing wave, that burst presently upon the shrieking beach with a wild roar, borrowed of the thunder. Yet the boat did not touch the land: some occult power seemed to hurl it back as it was

dashing on the shingle. And then the back-beat of the white shattered breaker would whirl it out, until another wave, with monstrous back, would heave beneath it, and bear it hissing—like the rain—back toward the beach, on which it was to burst anon with the hollow, vibrating boom so like the thunder.

Towards morning, the storm had wearied itself out and fled away, grumbling at times like a defeated giant. And then the earth, sending up its rich fat incense after the libation, rejoicing at the blessing which the seeming curse had brought with it. All green things were refreshed by the copious bounty of the rain; and the smoke and soot of London being washed off into the inky gutters, poor prisoner Nature in the squares and parks put on a gay aspect for awhile, until all the birds began to twitter and chirp with surprise at the alteration in her appearance.

When day returned, it found the world improved and beautified, and all things rejoicing. Only through poor Marian's window the pure cool dawn peeped fruitlessly. In vain the fresh breath of the morning fanned softly on the pane for her.

She woke—with what a burning thirst, yet with what a disinclination to move, to get up, and drink. She drowsed off, and, drowsing, she dreamt her desire accomplished, and seemed to sit by a delicious stream, and dip up the cool wave in the white cup of a lily. But the vision scattered, and the thirst was unquenched.

She staggered out of bed at last, and, pouring the water out of her carafe into the tumbler, gulped it down greedily. It could not appease that fierce drought. And how heavy and weary was her aching head! It throbbed and beat, and seemed as if it must part, so horribly did the pain appear to swell in it.

A minute ago she was so burning hot when she groped her way towards the water-bottle. Now, she was shivering until the very bed shook with it. And yet she was not cold; on the contrary, her blood seemed like a living flame coursing through her veins, and her flesh was like a burning coal.

She sat up for a while, in the vain hope of finding ease. She felt such a nausea, and her head swam so. Then she was glad to fling herself down on the bed again, her back pained her so; and now she could find ease in no one posture for more than a few seconds at a time. It was torture! Just as she believed she had at last found a comfortable position, and was nearly dropping off to sleep, there came a little gnawing pain that grew and grew in intensity until all

chance of sleep fled, and with a weary groan she was obliged to begin tossing and turning anew ; and her skin was so hot and dry that she could scarcely bear anything touching it—the bed clothes seemed like sheets of heated lead. Meanwhile every pulse in her frame was beating fast and furious, as though her veins were running with quicksilver.

As the hour came for her to rise, however, a feverish sleep came upon her—not to refresh, but to make her yet more languid and weak. She moaned a faint answer to Mrs. Pincher, when she knocked at the door and told her it was time to get up. But she did not stir—the will, as well as the strength, was wanting.

Master Algernon and Miss Alice waited for their breakfast for some time. But no Miss Carlyle came to make it for them. So they got tired of waiting, and it was agreed that Mrs. Pincher should be waited on by a deputation, consisting of Master Algernon. Accordingly, that amiable child went down to the housekeeper and complained that “that lazy pig, Miss Carlyle, was lying in bed, instead of getting their breakfasts.” Thereupon Mrs. Pincher hastened up stairs, and, after knocking at Marian’s door twice, without receiving an answer, walked in.

She saw in a moment that the governess was seriously ill, and in the same moment took offence at her impertinence in making herself so troublesome.

“Oh, bother sick people!” said Mrs. P. to herself, as she made her way down stairs to her master, who was taking his breakfast in solitary grandeur, before starting for business.

“Oh, if you please, Sir,” said Mrs. Pincher, on coming into the presence, “Miss Carlyle’s ill.”

“Well, I’m sorry for it, but I can’t help it, can I, Mrs. Pincher?”

“She’s too ill to attend to the children, Sir.”

“Oh, nonsense! she can’t be too ill to attend to her duties; I don’t pay her to be ill. She must go on.”

“She’s not up yet, Sir.”

“Not up! Disgraceful! At this time of day, too! Here am I—a man of my position, out in society last night—here am I, up with the lark, and going off to my labour. Not up! Tell her to get up and see to the children at once. Tell her I never allow anyone in my employment to be ill. By Jove, just let me catch any of my clerks at it—discharged on the spot! Yes, they would, Mrs. Pincher.”

“But, Sir, I’m afraid, if you please, she’s better in bed, for it looks like fever, or something of that sort.”

“Fever! Here! In this house! How dare she do it?”

Mrs. Pincher, I suppose, did not see her way to any excuse for Marian's audacity — or did not try to find one. She only shook her head, as she continued,—

"Better in bed, Sir, for the sake of the children. You see they might take it."

At this Mr. Orr did at last get really alarmed.

"Of course, of course! For Heaven's sake, don't let Algernon go near her. Forbid her to leave her room. Don't let her stir out of bed. And, stop! Tell her she must send for a doctor—tell her I insist on her sending for a doctor!"

Mrs. Pincher went back again to Marian's room, and gave her Mr. Orr's message. Poor Marian was too weak and overcome to answer or dispute—she merely bowed her head, and turning round on her pillow, prayed for the relief of tears, or the relief of death.

When Mrs. Pincher reached her own room again, she rang the bell, summoned one of the canary-coloured to her, and bade him go seek a doctor. As it was intended that his fee should be deducted from Marian's salary when it fell due, Mrs. Pincher told the man to go to a physician close by, and fetch him. Had the fee been chargeable to the housekeeping expenses, a neighbouring chemist would have done admirably well.

In about half an hour's time the physician arrived. Dr. Arthur was a very clever man, but wanted much of the humanity and tenderness which are so necessary in a doctor. He went up to Marian's room, looked at her, felt her pulse, examined her face and neck closely, shook his head, and said nothing until he had left the room.

When he had retired with Mrs. Pincher, and was taking his two guineas, he at last opened his mouth.

"Virulent smallpox!" was all he said. But it was quite enough. Mrs. Pincher gave a shriek and a jump, and hardly giving him time to get down stairs, hustled him out of the house, slammed the door, and rushed away to her master, who had delayed his departure until he could hear what the doctor said.

"Lord, Sir, if it isn't violent smallpox!" said Mrs. Pincher, out of breath with hurry and alarm.

What Mr. Orr said—how he raved and how he swore at Marian for bringing smallpox into the house, and what threats he uttered, I dare not attempt to describe.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

## LA GRANDE DAME SANS MERCI.

OFF clattered Mr. Orr's groom on one of the carriage horses to the nearest telegraph office; and away flashed the mysterious spark on its errand, telling the story of Marian's illness to the clerk in the little office belonging to the station down among the hop plantations in Kent. He was not the man to delay a message of Mr. Orr's one moment; and so he despatched a porter with a letter post haste to the country residence of that great man, situated in its prim *parvenu* park.

When Mrs. Orr received the message, you may imagine her anger and consternation. What was to be done? She must leave Miss Orr where she was—it would never do to risk the infection for her—she might lose all her good looks! In the meantime she, Mrs. Orr, must be off to town without delay. She must be driven to the station at once, to see when the next train would leave for London.

On reaching the station she learnt that Mr. Orr had sent another telegraphic message—this time to the station-master—ordering a special train for his wife. It was a rather expensive luxury; but Mr. Orr was so utterly helpless in his management of domestic matters without his wife's aid, that it was worth his while to secure her early presence at any cost.

So off steamed Mrs. Orr to London, wondering all the way what she should do with the children. Luckily, she remembered that Mr. Orr's sister, Mrs. Bullyan, had invited them down to stay with her in Hertfordshire. She would pack them off at once, with strict directions to them not to mention the cause of their exile. She might have sent them down into Kent, but she would not for a second endanger dear Honoria. She infinitely preferred the risk of letting the two children go among Mrs. Bullyan's seven little ones.

By the time she had matured this amiable and sisterly plan she found her engine slackening speed to run into the London Bridge Station, where the yellow chariot was in waiting to convey her to Grosvenor Place.

In and out, among cabs and omnibuses, flashed the yellow chariot, as if panels were imperishable and wheels never got locked. The two bays seldom stepped out to greater purpose,

and the coachman was never nearer committing homicide at every crossing.

People to whom that yellow chariot was a familiar object, stared at it—shook their heads—and hurried away to look at the paper, and see what had happened to the Stocks to send old Orr home at such a pace.

Utterances that were not exactly blessings—not loud, but deep—followed the rapid wheels of the family equipage—the utterances of enraged cabmen, defeated 'bus drivers, and scores of pedestrians who had been compelled to fly with their lives in their hands.

Meanwhile, unconscious of and unheeding the astonishment and indignation her progress was exciting, Mrs. Orr sped westward on her errand. Her errand of what? Of mercy? We shall see presently.

She rolled up to the door of the house in Grosvenor Place, where pale footmen waited to admit her, and trembling housemaids, gathered in Mrs. Pincher's room, where in a high state of expectation as to her probable course. Only Mrs. Pincher maintained her presence of mind. She had had the disease as a girl, and had no fear.

But the rest of the household were thrown into a pitiable state of alarm and consternation. The big footmen turned as white as hair-powder when they learnt the awful news that the smallpox was in the house. "It all came," they said, with an air of great wisdom, "along of 'aving guvnusses and sich about the place!"

As for the female servants, they were in a state of downright revolt, and refused to attend on Miss Carlyle or go anywhere near her room. "Adieu," they thought, and with considerable reason, "to the delicate attentions of the butcher and the baker." Farewell to the hope of inspiring a warmer flame than martial ardour in the breasts of those gallant fellows, who—I suppose on account of their devotion to our female domestics—are called the Household Troops.

But Pincher was quite equal to the occasion. She plied the whip of her scorn to the footmen until they felt as they might have done had the coachman, in a moment of inadvertence, complied with the public demand of "Whip behind," and laid his lash about their calves. As for the maid-servants, Pincher, as a woman, was able to make them as miserable as possible by giving savage digs at their tender points, and trampling on their most sensitive feelings.

All the servants, for once in their lives, hailed the advent of Mrs. Orr with joy. They did not know what she could or

would do, but they seemed to welcome her arrival as that of a sure preserver.

Of course the first thing Mrs. Orr did, on reaching home, was to have an interview with her husband in his sanctum. In that sacred retreat she found him guarding against any danger of infection by smoking a very choice cigar from a box which stood him in about a shilling apiece wholesale, and which he therefore reserved for his own special smoking, giving away to his friends a very superior British article at forty shillings the box. People said, "What bad cigars Orr smoked;" but he did not care. He was inwardly conscious of rectitude and economy.

"The owdacious minx!" were Mrs. Orr's first words, as soon as the greeting between herself and her husband was over. It did not take long. She simply offered him a portion of her cheek about the circumference of half-a-crown, where there was no rouge or pearl powder to disturb, in the immediate neighbourhood of what I suppose I must call her left curl—for it certainly was hers, though it had been part of the stock-in-trade of her hairdresser about three weeks before.

"The owdacious minx! This all comes of letting her go to see her friends. I thought at the time I was too indulgent. She didn't ought to have any, and I'll never take another that has. Drat her impudence!"

Mr. Orr explained that Mrs. Pincher had since learned that Miss Carlyle attributed her catching the disease to her having picked up a sick child in the park, and carrying it to the hospital for charity.

"Charity, indeed! I'll charity her. What business has she with charity, I should like to know—aint we employing her out of charity? Why hadn't she thought about 'be just before you're generous,'—what right had she to go and be charitable, and bring home the smallpox to her employer's children? You haven't let 'em go near her, I hope. How are they?"

Mr. Orr had forbidden their seeing Miss Carlyle, he said, as soon as he had learnt what was the matter with her. But they had been with her on the Sunday evening after her return.

"How are the darlings? Have you sent for the doctor? He might take precautions, you know, Orr."

Her husband told her he was momentarily expecting the physician's arrival. Algernon had appeared a little dull and heavy in the morning, and his father had instantly called in medical assistance. It may be some relief to the reader, who, I hope, takes a deep interest in that amiable lad, to be told at

once that his indisposition merely arose from his having, with his inherited sharp eye for business, attempted to make some hardbake, instead of buying it, and had manufactured a villainous compound eminently calculated to produce indigestion of a violent order.

"I suppose we must pay her her quarter, Orr?"

"Why—you—you don't mean to say you think we can send her off. She's in bed!"

"She must get up, then," said this Christian lady, firmly.

"Thank goodness," said Mr. Orr, "I didn't think it possible, or I should have done it. But where can she go?"

"Out of this house, at any rate. It don't matter a dump to us where she goes then. Aint there hospitals?"

Mr. Orr said "Yes," with a sigh, for he was compelled to be a "voluntary contributor" to more of those institutions than he liked. Alas, for the cruel duties entailed by wealth and position!

"Now, make haste, and tell me how much we owe her," said the lady.

Mr. Orr went into a calculation, and found that about fifteen pounds would be due to Miss Carlyle.

"How's that, Orr? Of course you know about money matters better nor I, but I don't make it that?" said Mrs. Orr.

It was two quarters, her husband explained—the girl was entitled to a quarter's notice or a quarter's wages—and then there was the current quarter, unless Mrs. Orr had advanced her anything.

"Advance her anything, indeed! Catch me at it! Not such a fool as that, Orr. But, look here, she's only been here about six weeks from last quarter-day, and that would be only about three pound fifteen; and that, and the wages instead of notice, comes to eleven five. She shan't have a penny more!"

Mr. Orr was of the contrary opinion, and held that the whole quarter was due, but his wife wouldn't hear it.

"She shan't have a penny more, I tell you. Why, it would pay her to go and get the smallpox again at her next place. I can't do it conscientiously, my dear. We ought to consider it would be an injustice to her next employers to encourage such goings on. There, it's no use talking; give me the money for her!"

The money was produced; and Mrs. Orr, fortifying herself with a glass of liqueur—she would have drunk gin, this fine lady, if she hadn't been afraid it was vulgar, so she took liqueurs instead—and, carrying a handkerchief steeped in Eau de Cologne, made an ascent to Miss Carlyle's room.

"Well, Miss Carlyle," she said, in a tone of offended surprise, "what have you to say to all this?"

Marian stared at her feebly in blank bewilderment, and asked, in a weak voice, "All what?"

"All what, indeed! Why, your going and frequenting with low companions, or taking up with beggar children or what not, and bringing smallpox into the house. All what, indeed! How dare you endanger those blessed children in this way?"

And Mrs. Orr went on in a refined strain of invective for some time until at last she perceived that she was injuring her own cause—for poor Marian was becoming so prostrated by her violence that she might not be able to move.

So Mrs. Orr wound up her harangue by flinging the eleven pounds five shillings on the bed.

"There, Miss Carlyle, take your money and go! I can't permit you to stop in the house a moment longer."

Poor Marian was aghast at this inhuman order. But Mrs. Orr did not choose to notice her surprise. She rang the bell, and began pacing up and down the room with her handkerchief stuffed to her mouth and nose. No one came. Mrs. Orr rang again furiously; and then, after some delay, Mrs. Pincher made her appearance.

"I couldn't get any of those fools to answer your bell, Mum, so I just come myself," said the housekeeper.

"Send for a cab at once, and help Miss Carlyle to pack up and dress," said her mistress.

I am bound in honour to Pincher to admit that even she was a little surprised at such vigorous measures.

"Law, Mum, hadn't you better mind? If anything was to happen, inquests would be the result, and might be awkward," she whispered, drawing her mistress on one side.

"I'll risk that! Besides, she hasn't got any friends," was the lady's truly Christian answer, made in the same low tone.

Accordingly, Mrs. Pincher busied herself in pushing Marian's things into her box; which done, she proceeded, with as much gentleness as she was capable of, to dress Marian.

The excitement of her interview with Mrs. Orr, the increasing illness, and the weariness of dressing, were too much for poor Marian. By the time the cab arrived and she was ready, her senses had almost left her, and her brain was wandering.

"Where's she to go, Mum?" asked Pincher, coming down to her mistress to announce that the governess was ready to leave.

"Where she likes."

"Law bless you, she can't speak, Mum!"

"Send her to the hospital, then."

"Yes, Mum. Shall I pay her cab?"

"Cab? No, certainly not! Hasn't she got seven pound ten of mine that she never worked for! She's got money, let her pay."

So Mrs. Pincher contrived, not without difficulty, to get Marian down stairs and into the cab, giving the driver five shillings of the poor girl's money, and telling him to take her to the hospital. It was a nobly humane action, was it not? I doubt not that Mr. and Mrs. Orr felt they had done their duty—nay, more than their duty—for they might simply have pushed her out of doors to fall down and die in the street, they argued; and so they really believed themselves kindly, charitable, and forgiving Christians.

But, unfortunately, this sense of duty done and charity shown was fated to be early disturbed in Mrs. Orr's breast. The cab, with its half-unconscious freight, could hardly have got out of the next street when Mrs. Orr rang the bell violently. A canary-coloured footman was at once in attendance.

"Run, run! Stop the cab! The ungrateful wretch. Send the police after her?"

The footman went down, looked out of the front door, sauntered to the nearest corner, and then returned to report that the cab was gone beyond pursuit, and there was no policeman in sight.

"The ungrateful wretch! And how stupid of me not to think of it!"

"Of what, my dear?" inquired her husband rather anxiously.

"Why, I never stopped for the doctor's visit out of her wages!"

It is not impossible that some of my readers may put down what I have here written as exaggeration—may be inclined to believe human nature incapable of such cruelty as the Orrs displayed.

But I have set down nothing that is untrue, as they will admit, when I remind them that in the year 1858 or 1859, I forget which—but at all events as near as that to this present civilised age—a certain Mrs. C—— (so the papers gave her name, enviously robbing her of the fame she so well deserved), an English lady, residing at Boulogne, finding her governess to be dangerously ill, had her dressed and sent off, in a dying state, to her brother, who lived at Lille. The poor girl died on the way, but Mrs. C——, with almost supernatural forethought, had provided for such an accident by attaching to the

nearly insensible creature's dress a card, on which was written the address of the brother at Lille.

I don't think, in the face of that veritable history, that my description of what Mrs. Orr was capable of can be a very great exaggeration. To be sure I might have made her think of the direction card, which was an attention of the most delicate nature; but then, you see, Mrs. Orr didn't know where Marian was going! At any rate, as a set-off, you see, Marian went away without paying her doctor's bill, which act of black ingratitude must be some slight excuse for Mrs. Orr if she fails in a few minor details to be quite as humane and thoughtful as the "English lady resident at Boulogne."

Nobody, I suppose, takes any interest in that cab-load of sick governess that goes jolting over the stones—who knows whither? for it is not every cabman who could be safely trusted with a young girl in an unconscious state, and with some disposable luggage.

But I feel sure that everyone will be delighted to learn that Marian's imprudence brought no fatal results on the Orr household. Algernon got over his indigestion; and health, and peace, and prosperity still made the great house in Grosvenor Place their head-quarters. What a blessing it must be, my dear Mr. and Mrs. Orr, to have a good conscience and plenty of money!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## ALONE IN LONDON.

WITH the morning of the day succeeding that on which Henry Vorian so startled his father with the discovery that he was an honest and honourable gentleman, came a letter from Scrooby, enclosing a cheque to meet his lordship's immediate wants.

It was a curious fact that all the preceding evening, although she could not have expected to hear from Mr. Scrooby so soon, my lady spent much of her time in the library, and contrived somehow to be passing through the hall on some errand or another whenever the postman's knock was audible, and the Lacquoigne letters came tumbling into the letter-box. My lord and she had been invited to Sir Timothy Walsingham's ball that evening, but they did not go. And to the mute surprise of the footman, who was doing duty as porter in the hall, my lady poked her aristocratic nose into the letter-box, and fished out the letters with her own aristocratic fingers. By the last post the missive, for which apparently she had been on the watch, arrived, for her ladyship gave a sort of satisfied "Ah!" as if her expectations were realised—put it in her pocket, and went up stairs. Yet I fancy the letter was not addressed to her ladyship, but to her ladyship's governess.

This, however, is a digression into which I was unconsciously betrayed by the mention of Scrooby's communication. That communication was eminently satisfactory to my lady. She had now the means of ridding herself of this dangerous and designing young person, who had been laying traps for the heir of the noble house of Lacquoigne.

As for my lord, on receipt of the cheque he became temporarily joyous, but for other reasons than those which influenced her ladyship. He, like many other poor gentlemen, was really better and happier at the mere sight of money belonging to him, and used to lay it out mentally five or six times over in the fulness of his heart—a meditative extravagance immediately checked by her ladyship, who promptly put him in mind of the numerous quarters in which debts needed to be paid off or reduced, and at the bare mention of which the sum he had been pensively lavishing, dwindled into a drop in the ocean of indebtedness.

This cheque, which Lord Lacquoigne was inwardly appro-



priating to the purchase of various pleasant but not strictly necessary articles, was, as my lady reminded him, intended to pay off the governess, and enable them to get rid of her with promptitude, as soon as it was cashed, with which intent it was forthwith sent to one of my lord's tradesmen.

"Ah, yes. To be sure, so it is. But confound it, my lady, I could have found plenty to do with it, if that infernal donkey of a boy of ours hadn't run his head against this wall."

"And so could I," said my lady, sweetly; whereupon his lordship felt rebuked.

"You'd better see the girl, my lady, and send her packing. I don't know how to manage these confounded matters."

"Oh, of course I shall discharge my own servants!"

"Ah, yes; I see."

With that his lordship sauntered out of the room, and sat down in the library to read the *Times* comfortably.

"Send Miss Carlyle to me," said my lady to the footman, who had come in to fetch away the silver tea-pot, in order that the children might have their breakfast.

"Yes, m'leddy," said Thomas, and departed on his errand.

In a few minutes there came a faint tap at the door.

"Come in!" said my lady, with a stern cold voice.

Alice entered, looking pale and frightened. Thomas, who was a little curious to know why his noble mistress had sent for the governess, found an excuse for coming into the room again, on the chance of hearing what was said. But Lady Lacquoigne was too much accustomed to maintaining silence before her servants—had too many secrets from her domestics—to be betrayed into any indiscretion. She waited till Thomas, finding his attempt a failure, left the room. But she did not tell Alice to be seated, and so the poor girl had to stand trembling while the deliberate Thomas loitered about, reluctant to depart, and brimming over with curiosity.

You know the servants' hall—in this house the kitchen—was of course pretty well posted up in what was going on. The last words which had passed between Henry and his father had been overheard, and the reason had been guessed, and there was quite a warm interest felt for once by the servants in the affairs of the family.

At length even Thomas could find no further excuse for loitering about the room, and was compelled to tear himself away.

Then my lady, who had been studiously abstaining from looking at Alice, turned the edge of her aristocratic nose to the poor girl, as the executioner in old times turned the glitter-

ing blade of the axe towards the condemned. The hard impenetrable gray eyes gleamed on each side of the cruel promontory, and the thin pale lips were set firmly, just showing the white teeth. It was a face for one of the Fates, if not for the most genteel and high-born of the Furies.

"You are, perhaps, aware, Miss Carlyle, that the Honourable Captain Vorian had an interview with his father yesterday?"

Alice bowed, not daring to raise her eyes to that stern unrelenting face, and instinctively turning cold as stone.

"I imagined as much!" continued Lady Lacquoigne. "Perhaps you may be aware also of the purpose of that interview?"

Alice, still lacking power of utterance, made a gesture, implying her ignorance.

"I can inform you, then," her ladyship went on, in the same imperturbable voice, "that the Honourable Captain Vorian's father and myself are of opinion that it is time our eldest son, the heir of the peerage, should select a wife from the society in which he moves—from his equals in wealth and position." This last was said with an air of great *hautour*, as though the Lacquoignes were titled Barings, or Rothschilds with an English peerage. It was said slowly and deliberately, in order that Alice might make no mistake about its meaning, but might appreciate its force thoroughly.

And Alice did feel its meaning—a cold weight oppressed her heart, as though the lid of a marble tomb had been closed down upon it.

"You will understand his lordship's surprise and anger, on learning that a person in his employ has had the audacity to entrap Captain Vorian into an attachment quite unworthy of his birth—a disgraceful clandestine engagement, which is as dishonourable as it is degrading."

There was no passion, no angry raising of her voice, in the delivery of this bitter speech. Her ladyship weighed out her words, as an apothecary measures out poison, with infinite deliberation and nicety. All the blood in Alice's body seemed to fly to her face and burn there—the torture was so cruel.

"A designing and unscrupulous person, Miss Carlyle, must consent, when detected, to listen to the truth. I consider your conduct base and dishonourable to the highest degree, and rendered, if possible, still more culpable by your assumed air of modesty and respectability. I regret that I should have allowed myself to be deceived by such a commonplace deceit—by such an ordinary trick of women of your description. I received no character with you, and as I took you into my employment without the usual vouchers for your respectability,

perhaps I deserve to suffer. But understand, as you came to me without a character, so you leave me. And more. I shall see that you are not permitted to plot against the comfort of other families—the police will receive instructions to look after you, and I shall even go so much out of my way as to denounce you if ever I learn that you are attempting to insinuate yourself into the employment of respectable families.”

The threat about the police was an outburst, cleverly concealed under an appearance of calm, of the malice and anger of a bad woman's mind, enraged at Alice's beauty, which was not lessened as she stood trembling in this haughty lady's presence—now blushing, now paling—with her large blue eyes brimmed with tears. But, absurd and idle as the threat was, it instilled terror into poor Alice's inexperienced mind. The bare idea of being placed under the *surveillance* of the police alarmed her beyond measure, and all the effort she was capable of was barely sufficient to sustain her and keep her from sinking down to earth in her vague horror and sense of utter friendlessness.

Lady Lacquoigne counted out the money due for Alice's salary, and placed it in a little heap on a piece of paper, which she pushed across to Alice as daintily as if she feared infection from the touch of her hand. When Alice had gathered up the notes and gold, and counted them, my lady resumed her lecture.

“I forbid you, remember, to have any correspondence with my son. If I detect any communications between you, I shall have you punished without any mercy. Our legal adviser will be here this afternoon, and I shall give him the necessary instructions. I consider it my duty as a lady, moving in the sphere in which I am placed, to set a good example, and I feel that I ought not to be deterred by any mistaken pity from punishing such an imposition and deceit as you have practised. It is only on the understanding that you never attempt to see or write to the Honourable Captain Vorian again, that I consent to spare you. You understand?”

Alice, still silent before this torrent of harsh, pitiless denunciation, could only bow her head still lower—sinking almost on her knees in her abasement and misery, and clinging to the table for support.

“You can quit this roof at once—this very instant. And the sooner the better for you, for fear I should repent of my clemency. I am not doing my duty to society. I ought to expose the practices of a mercenary adventurer, who works her way into noble families with the view of entrapping noble men's sons into disgraceful connections, from which she hopes

to derive position, or perhaps money. You can leave the room!"

Alice turned round, and groped her way to the door. She was so blinded by her tears she could not see—so choked by her sobs she could not speak. Crushed, heart-broken, wild with shame, and grief, and disappointment, she had only one wish now—to fly to her sister, and pour forth all her sorrows to her.

Poor Alice! The petted and spoilt child—the favourite of the household, the indulged girl, the idolised sister—to be treated in this way! It was hard to bear, but luckily Alice's was not a nature to suffer deeply. One who has been caressed and made much of by everybody, loses somewhat in depth of feeling. Without the capacity to love warmly, there seldom exists the compensating power of feeling strongly. It was anger at being thwarted, surprise at being spurned, wounded vanity and self-love, that Alice suffered. I think she hardly thought of Henry and what he had gone through until long after she had packed up her little box and was preparing to leave. And then his feelings were soon forgotten in the recollection that her dreams of the future—and they were not dreams of love in a cottage—had been rudely dissipated.

A cab was summoned presently, and Alice's baggage was placed on the roof; and then my lady saw her off the premises, watching her from the top of the first flight of stairs, as if she feared she might kidnap Henry, and carry him off in her passage through the hall.

"Where to, Miss?" asked the cabman, as he closed the door.

For a moment Alice was puzzled for an answer to this simple question; but the next instant she remembered Mrs. Bartlett.

"Number one hundred and seventy-five, Pratt Street, Camden Town," she said.

"All right, Miss," said the cabman, clambering to his seat.

Off they rattled and jingled all the weary way to Pratt Street, where the cabman, on reaching the desired number, knocked, and then held the cab door open in readiness.

Alice got out, and reached the steps just as the servant appeared.

"Is Mrs. Bartlett in?" asked Alice.

"Don't know such a person," was the reply, which rather staggered Alice.

"This is one hundred and seventy-five, is it not?"

"Oh, yes, this is a hundred and seventy-five all right."

"And you're sure Mrs. Bartlett doesn't live here? This *is* Pratt Street, I'm sure."

"I'll go and ask missis," said the servant, prudently shutting the door in Alice's face, for fear she should be tempted to steal the umbrellas in the hall.

In a minute the door reopened, and the servant appeared again, accompanied this time by a stout red-faced woman, who had evidently just come steaming from the washing-tub.

"Mrs. Bartlett had used to live here, Mum," said the new comer. "But she have a-gone nearly six monthls. I took the house arter her."

"You don't know where she has moved?"

"I have a-heard tell as she had a boarding-house in some of them streets near St. James's Square, but I can't mind the name nohow."

Here was a perplexity! What could Alice do with her boxes? She asked the cabman's advice, telling him that the person with whom she was going to stay had, it appeared, removed without letting her know.

"Well, yer'd better go back where yer come from," he said, gruffly; "London's a big place for to go a-looking for your friends in without any direckshuns."

Alice said she could not go back, and asked him what she should do about her boxes.

"Oh, as for them, you can 'posit them at the cloak room of the railway, nigh handy here."

The suggestion was the best she could get, so Alice drove off to the station, and left her boxes there. I suppose the cabman considered that advice was not to be expected gratis, so stuck on an extra shilling to his fare. At any rate, the sum he demanded was so large that, though she did not dispute it, Alice felt that she must be very sparing in the luxury of cabs in future. Accordingly, she set out to walk to Grosvenor Place, where she intended to ask to see Marian, and get her advice as to what she should do.

It was a longish walk for one who had gone through what she had that morning. It was a disagreeable walk, too; for Alice, as we know, was pretty, and a girl who is pretty and unprotected cannot walk in London very far without attracting the attention of some of those idle vagabonds, with better clothes than breeding, who make it their business to degrade their own sex and insult the other by their insolent black-guardism. Although I am by no means a vehement admirer of the police, who, I think, are getting too despotic and arbitrary, I could with infinite satisfaction see every constable

armed with a horse-whip to chastise these disgraces of manhood.

It was long after noon when Alice reached Mrs. Orr's mansion in Grosvenor Place, and knocked timidly at the door. The yellow chariot was in waiting to take Mrs. Orr out for her airing; and a little crowd, consisting of a butcher, three newspaper boys, and a lad from the telegraph office, was collected about the steps to see the she-millionaire enter her carriage.

"Can I see Miss Carlyle, please?" asked Alice, with a tremulous voice, of the footman who opened the door.

"She aint 'ere. She were sent away two or three days ago with the smallpox," said the canary-coloured flunkey, turning away immediately, and beginning to close the door.

Alice was horror struck at the news, and could scarcely find voice enough to ask if the footman could inform her where her sister was gone.

"Oh, to the horsepital, I suppose."

"Which one, do you know?" Alice asked, when Mrs. Orr, descending the stairs, asked, in a loud voice—

"What is it, James? What does she want?"

"Please, M'm, it's a young person a-henquiring after Miss Carlyle, M'm, which she's her sister, she says, M'm——"

"Send her away! Shut the door, James. Why, Lor, we shall have her bringing more smallpox. Tell her to go at once!"

The door was instantly shut in Alice's face, amid the cheers of the assembled crowd, which, with the usual consistency of a mob, took the side of successful tyranny.

It seemed now to Alice as if all the world were against her, and she had not a friend left. She drew down her veil hastily, to conceal the tears she could not repress, and instinctively hurried away to the park—to the quiet corner where she and Marian had been accustomed to meet. There she sank down on the bench, and sobbed bitterly without ceasing.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## VARIOLA VICTRIX.

WHEN the cabman who conveyed Marian away from the Orrs' got a little out of the large thoroughfares, and was passing through some of the quiet streets of Pimlico, he turned round, and peered in through the front window at his fare.

Marian was quite insensible now. She was lying back in a corner of the cab in a dead faint. So the cabman pulled up, got down, opened the door, and first spoke to and subsequently shook her. But he could not rouse her from her stupor.

There was no need for him to be afraid to touch her, for his own face was seamed and pitted by the ravages of the dreadful disease. Of course he had stood out to Mrs. Pincher for extra fare on account of the infection, but that was because of the cab, not himself—though I don't suppose he had any intention of handing over the surplus to the next person who hailed him, as a sort of insurance against the risk.

When he found that she continued insensible, he mounted his box again, and, whipping his horse into a jog-trot, turned off by some back street, and finally pulled up in a low, dirty lane in Westminster.

In answer to his whistle, an unshaven, dirty, disreputable looking Jew came shambling out of an ill-looking, low-browed house.

"Vell, vat ish it, George?" snuffled the Hebrew.

"Here—lend a 'and, and take this here in," said the cabman, taking Marian's luggage off the roof.

"Shelp me if you aint a cool 'un," whispered the Israelite, hoarsely, and holding off, "with a fair inshide too."

"Lor bless yer, she's dead drunk. Now, then, look sharp, and take 'em in. I'll be back by-an'-by about 'em!"

After peering into the cab to assure himself of the insensibility of the fare, the Jew dismissed his scruples, and the luggage was removed from the roof, and conveyed into the house with an alacrity that showed considerable practice. During the operation, the child of Abraham kept a sharp eye up and down the lane, with his head on one side all the time, like an evil magpie, which bird he resembled in every particular save the cleanliness and gloss of his plumage.

This little arrangement completed, the cabman once more mounted his box, and drove off. But he had not gone very

far before the door of a favourite public-house of his standing temptingly on the swing invited him to drink to his own success in the late transfer of property. The fact was that he had deposited Marian's boxes with a Jew "fence," from whom, of course, he concealed the real cause of her insensibility, for fear the acute Israelite should make it a reason for beating him down in his bargain.

The temptation of the public-house was too strong for this enterprising spirit, so at the risk of his fare recovering consciousness, and possibly inquiring after her boxes (though that was improbable, as she had been too ill to notice their being put on the roof), he got down and entered the bar, to have a drink in honour of the occasion.

It so happened, however, that our commercial cabman had not long entered the bar when policeman A 299 came down the street. That intelligent officer was flushed with recent triumphs. He had chased a small boy who had been playing chuck-halfpenny, and had kicked him in the back pleasantly. He had pushed an Irishwoman into the gutter, and upset the oranges she was trying to sell. He had made two gentlemen connected with the Press (for which, like all crass despotisms, he entertained a rooted aversion) move on, on the supposition that, in comparing notes in their reports, they constituted a betting nuisance. In consequence, A 299 was radiant.

As he passed the door of the "Dog and Dolphin," there came to him a pleasant odour of stale beer and yesterday's tobacco, and he remembered that of late he had not been propitiated with quarterns while on night duty outside that establishment. He registered a vow to be revenged, and looked about him for a means of injuring the custom of the house. He spied the cab, and, peering into the vehicle, perceived its occupant. Marian was just recovering herself a little, and was moaning weakly. The intelligent A 299, seeing a respectable young woman evidently in great pain, at once set her down as being intoxicated, but, failing to detect any of the familiar smell of spirits about her, was obliged to think of something else.

Putting his head in at the bar-door, he fixed the cabman with his glittering eye, and said, with a voice of authority, "'Ere, cabby, wot a you got in your vehicle 'ere? Come on, and no nonsense, or I'll lock you up!"

The cabman obeyed this summons with cringing alacrity, and was as terrified as a bad conscience should be. He was much relieved, however, by the landlord, who, knowing A 299 pretty well, gave cabby a wink, and indicated by a rapid telegraphy that the constabular ferocity would be soluble in spirits.



"Wot a' yer got 'ere, eh?" said A 299 sternly.

"Well, ye see, Sir, it's a poor crittur as I'm a-takin' to the workus for charity, along o' bein' struck wi' small pox, and which it was on that account for to keep off affeckshun, bein' a family man, as I step in 'ere for to 'ave a little sperrit for to guard again it! and as you have been a-puttin' yer 'ead inside the cab, you might be took, an' if you'll allow me I'd be obliged if you'd let me hoffer ye a drop for to keep it off, as it is very rapid in takin' to one."

"Well, under them curkumstances," said A 299, wetting his lips involuntarily, "I'll jest take 'arf a drop as a matter of dooty, having to mix with the public, and might carry it with me if I didn't. An' after that I'll get up alongside and go with ye to the workus."

Accordingly cabby and constable took a glass together, and presently drove off to the workhouse. It was, perhaps, not the cabman's intention to take Marian to the workhouse; but having committed himself to that statement, he was obliged to stick to it when the policeman, with an eye to making himself important and conspicuous for zeal, volunteered to accompany him.

It was well for Marian that A 299 did volunteer, for even he had some difficulty in persuading the workhouse authorities to admit her. With extraordinary sagacity, he pointed out that while they were disputing about her parish, she was dying at the gates, and that her death would be rather awkward for them if he happened to be called on to give evidence before the coroner.

Grumbling considerably, and protesting against her impertinence in venturing to die anywhere but in her own parish, the tender guardians of the poor, appointed by law and the parish, at last consented to take Marian in under protest. They even, under compulsion of A 299, who inwardly intended to levy a per-centage thereon, paid the cabman his fare, so that, altogether, he had done rather a brisk morning's work without any risk or inconvenience to himself, for, of course, even supposing the next person who got into his cab was laid up with smallpox, it could not possibly be brought home to him. We must, however, now let this interesting individual, and that active and intelligent officer, A 299, disappear into space—probably amid the sincere regrets, and much against the wishes, of my readers, who, I hope, take an interest in these two precious characters. Just at this juncture, unfortunately, others claim our attention.

Here, then, is poor Marian, lying on the coarse pallet of the Union! She is smitten with that most awful of all the

scourges inflicted upon human nature by an inscrutable Providence—she is suffering from virulent smallpox, a disease which requires the most careful treatment, the most tender nursing, the most excellent medicine, the most nourishing diet, and the most complete silence. She will be attended by a medical man, underpaid for the amount of work he is expected to do, perhaps overpaid for the amount of knowledge and ability he brings to it. She will be taken charge of by pauper nurses, who never had sufficient energy to take care of themselves, or they would not be here, and who lack the nurse's best qualities—patience, intelligence, and experience. She will be physicked with inferior drugs, even supposing first of all that the right ones are prescribed, and when prescribed, made up. She will be fed on coarse gruel, or even supposing she have special diet ordered, it will consist (if it be not intercepted by the way) of beef-tea of about the strength obtained by dipping a pound of meat into a bucket of cold water, and of wine which is simply a decoction of dirt, dye, and unwholesome spirit. She will pass through the fiery ordeal amid the clamour of discontented paupers, the bustle and disturbance of incompetent attendants, in a ward more like a prison than a sick chamber, and with a bed and bedding fitter for a hardy soldier compelled to shift as he can on campaign than for an invalid under treatment for a dangerous and painful disorder.

It was almost a mercy when delirium supervened. In that she lost consciousness of the insatiable thirst which parched her day and night, of the restlessness that made sleep a stranger to her eyelids, of the strange unaccountable anxiety which turned thought into torture, of the feverish nervousness which aggravated the slightest noise into unbearable clamour, and caused her to shrink even at a word.

In alternate fits of prostration and wild raving, she passed from the earlier stages of the disease to the later. Her sufferings at Mrs. Orr's hands, the exposure and neglect she experienced on her way to the workhouse, and the insufficient treatment she met with there, all tended together to intensify the pain and increase the violence of the disease. The doctor gave her over; the nurses began to wish her gone; the patients in the ward abused her and complained querulously of her tenacity of life. But youth and a fine constitution were ranged on her side, and by-and-by the disease took its departure, but left her utterly prostrate. She lay on the narrow strand between life and death, conscious now—seeing the cold wave creeping up to her, but utterly incapable of any effort to escape from its fatal embrace.

By degrees—by very slow, almost imperceptible degrees,

however,—she at last began to get hold of life again ; began to take a pitying interest in herself, and to wonder what had happened to her, and where she was.

By-and-by she had gained strength enough to speak and make inquiries. Then she was told what had been the matter with her ; and so, after a time, she began to recall the past bit by bit, to build up her bygone life as we patch up a dream from its disjointed recollections. At last she remembered all, and then making inquiries found that she had been brought to the workhouse door, a beggar, without a penny or a rag in the world. She could not understand it.

There came a day when she was well enough to speak to her doctor, and ask what had happened to her ; what was the disease she had suffered from. And when he told her small-pox, there came a terrible doubt and anxiety over her, but she was too true a woman to let him perceive it. But presently, when he was gone, she called one of the pauper nurses to her, and asked her to bring her a looking-glass. She would not ask her if she was disfigured ; she preferred to trust her own eyes.

The old hag laughed at the request. What did paupers want with looking-glasses ? She did not think there was such a thing in the place. Another nurse, younger, and therefore better able to sympathise with Marian, promised to try to get her one, looking at the poor girl sadly, and shaking her head as she hurried away.

Before long she returned with a fragment of mirror—a little relic of vanity—still clung to even in this debasement and Slough of Despond by some poor creature that had once had a face—perhaps only too pretty !

With a trembling hand Marian clutched the bit of glass. The nurse with instinctive delicacy turned away and busied herself with another patient.

And then Marian looked and saw the wreck of her former self. Her head had been shaved in her delirium, and the hair had hardly begun to grow again in short downy curls. Her complexion was white, dull, and leprous—there was no transparency in the skin, no delicate bloom on the cheek—and here and there a disfiguring pit marked it deeply. Her eyes had lost their lustre—her lips were pale and parched, and her cheeks were hollow and thin !

Would anyone recognise her in this living corpse ? she wondered to herself. And then came the bitterest agony of all : Would *he* know her again ? or supposing he did discern in these marred features the ghost of the woman he had been about to marry, could he continue to care for her ?

I believe if Death, with all his most racking tortures, had snatched Marian away—had torn from her her young life with all its strong roots clinging to existence, at the time when the disease first seized her, she would not have suffered one tithe what she felt now, as she lay slowly recovering, with the awful knowledge of the change that had been wrought in her. If she had died, she must have consented to part from him in the certainty of a happier meeting and a renewal of love hereafter. He would have visited her grave, and have discerned through the turf, not the face of a corpse, but the features of her he had loved, and his tears falling there would have reached, warm, to her cold heart. But now she was living and dead. She was another woman, she felt; and if he ceased to love her so changed, it was rather a proof of his constancy to that other self of hers that he had first loved. "Who knows," she thought, "but that if I had died he might have forgotten—but then I should not have known it, sleeping quietly. But now to live and see him changed is very death in life—to love him and know he cannot love me—to be near him, and nothing to him—oh, it is bitterer than death!"

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MISS DELAMERE'S EMPORIUM.

THE gathering shades of evening at last reminded Alice that she had no home for the night. She rose from the bench on which she had been seated, and wandered away without any definite purpose, but feeling that at all events she must leave the park.

Chance conducted her steps towards Pimlico, and she walked far in that uninteresting suburb, with its miles of streets, all bearing the same stolid stucco faces, only differing very slightly from each other in small details. There are few things so depressing as a modern suburb. It presents a weary sameness—an unending repetition of pretentious shams: porticos with plaster peeling off ere they be a year old; windows that pretend to be plate-glass, but whose large panes bulge and buckle, and reflect distortedly; wide doorways opening on narrow halls; lofty rooms with ceilings that crack as soon as the upper rooms receive their furniture; imitation marble

mantelpieces over chimneys that always smoke; and doors, grained to represent maple, that warp and crack, and let in draughts innumerable.

In this unhomelike neighbourhood poor Alice wandered in search of a home. She looked wistfully at many a house where a card announced "Lodgings to let." But she could find no encouragement in the mere blank look of these places. She could not guess from the look of them what kind of people they were who lived there.

At last she found one house where the ticket was placed in a window full of flowers. "Here," she thought to herself, "is some one who loves flowers. I will try here."

She knocked at the door—a modest, faint tap. Immediately a heavy step shuffled along the passage, and a stout old lady opened the door.

"You let lodgings, I believe?" said Alice.

"Oh, we don't want any of your sort here, young woman," was the only answer she got as the door was slammed in her face.

She was utterly aghast, and could not conceive why she was treated so harshly. But it was getting so late now that she could not stay to choose, so she made up her mind with a great effort to knock at the next house where she saw a bill up. She did so, but with the same result as before. After all, it was lucky for her that she went to lodgings which refused to take her in. She might have had a far worse fortune.

At length she was so wearied out and broken-spirited that she was fit to sit down in the street and cry her heart out. Just now, too, she began to feel faint and hungry.

She made her way to a baker's shop close by, and asked for a meat-pie. The girl in the shop, seeing how ill she looked, brought her a glass of water, and paid such kind attention to her, that poor Alice's heart grew too full, and she burst into an agony of tears. The girl tried to comfort her; and her sympathy seemed so precious to our poor Alice that, before many minutes were over, she had told her all her story, and they were sitting side by side as if they had been friends for years.

"Law, there," said the girl, who was as ungrammatical as she was good, "them people a-course didn't take you in without any luggage, and you a young woman by yourself; more especially in this here neighbourhood. But look here; mother's a washerwoman, and she have a room to let, and you're welcome to it till you can look about you a bit."

Alice was very grateful, and accepted the offer eagerly. She wished her new-found friend to tell her where her mother lived.

"Oh, I'll speak to Mrs. Bocking; she'll let you sit in the parlour along with her for an hour or so, when we shall 'ave to shut up shop, and we can go 'ome together; and you can fetch your boxes to-morrow."

In about an hour's time Alice and her new friend left the baker's shop, and walked to the latter's home, which was in a small lane near one of the great squares. The house where Mary Smart's mother lived was very humble and poorly furnished; but it was clean, and poor weary Alice was only too happy to fling herself on her hard bed, and seek refuge from her cares in sleep.

Mrs. Smart was a laundress, who washed for several families in the square, and who eked out her earnings by letting one of her rooms to servants out of place or respectable needlewomen. She was honest, hard-working, and kindly-dispositioned, but a very dragon when put out. She was a little doubtful of her daughter's prudence in bringing Alice home.

"There! I only hope she won't turn out a good-for-nothing baggage, Mary; which so she might, and no great wonder, for respectable people isn't picked up permiskus in the streets along of coming in for a meat-pie and a glass o' water. Though such I hope it won't be, for she's pleasing to speak to and tidy in her 'abits, as far as I can see."

The next day Alice went over and fetched her boxes, and arranged to take Mrs. Smart's lodgings until she could "turn herself round," as Mrs. Smart described it. That operation seems easy enough at first sight, but is in reality a very difficult and disheartening task.

"What are you a-going to do then, my dear?" said Mary Smart.

"I don't know a bit in the world!"

"You're afraid of going out a-governessing again!"

"Oh, yes! Her ladyship is such a stern, unforgiving woman, she would hunt me down wherever I was. I declare I'm afraid to go out for fear some policeman should be after me."

"Lor, you hadn't need be frightened of them there. Why they aint above taking something to shut their eyes—not they! But if you don't like governessing, there's 'eaps of other things. Can you sew nice?"

"Yes, pretty neatly."

"There! I wish I could—but, bless ye, mother never could make nothing of me with my needle; and that's how it is I've been forced to go to baking and that. She could 'a got me a deal of sewing along of washing for Mr. Corker, the shirt-maker."

"Do you think she could get me anything of the sort to do?"

"I dare say as she could, my dear; I'll arsk her. Here, mother, just come here a minute, will yer?"

Mrs. Smart, who was up to her elbows in soapsuds, dried her hands, scraped the lather from her arms, and came, with a mild cloud of steam hanging about her.

"Well, what do you want now, Mary?"

"Look here, mother, the young lady 'ud be glad of some needlework to do. Don't you think as you might get her some from old Corker?"

"Law bless ye, my dear!" said Mrs. Smart, turning to Alice, "'twouldn't never pay you. The price as they give is sheer starvation. But I'll tell you what I might manage for you—get Miss Delamere, as keeps the bonnet-shop, which I washes for her, for to give you a trial. I know as one of her show-women was married recent; and I don't think as she's suited herself yet, for I see a card in the window yesterday as I went by with Mrs. Barker's linen, as lives in Aireybellor Row."

"Would you kindly give me a note to her, Mrs. Smart?"

"Law, Miss, I can't write, no more than figures and such simple things as is requisite for to put down washin' in; which, with the cepshun of sinding of my name, I can't write at all. But I'll just step round with you if you like, in about ten minutes, when I've a-wrung out the things as I have in the tub."

Miss Delamere's shop was a very gorgeous affair, with two large plate-glass windows in which was arranged a forest of the most showy bonnets, mounted on tall stands, like the heads of traitors on Temple Bar. Beyond these you saw a most charming apartment, fitted up with mirrors and gold-and-white chairs and muslin curtains, like an elegant boudoir. Into this pleasant retreat Alice and Mrs. Smart presently forced their way through a crowd of women, of all ages and ranks, engaged in staring in at the two windows of bonnets with, generally, speechless admiration.

Miss Delamere was a fine, tall woman, with a commanding air and a very rustling black silk dress. She was a regular Tartar in her shop, and all her women trembled before her. She was a dragon of propriety—so particular that you could not possibly believe a rumour (no doubt set afoot by Mrs. Jones, who had the rival bonnet-shop ten doors off) to the effect that Miss D. had been set up in business by a friend in the City; and that she had been seen at whitebait parties at Greenwich with very stylishly dressed ladies and gentlemen; and—and any other scandal you like which is at all calculated

to injure her reputation. At any rate, she was regular and punctual at business, and had never been known to absent herself from the shop but once, when she went—it happened to be one Derby-day—to see her mother in the country, and missed the train; and so was away for nearly two days.

The most fashionable ladies came to Miss Delamere for their bonnets. Some of the prettiest bonnets that appeared in the park of an afternoon were purchased at Miss Delamere's. She certainly had exquisite taste, and was not unreasonable—for a fashionable bonnet-maker.

Mrs. Smart introduced Alice to Miss Delamere, and told that lady of Alice's wish to enter her service as shopwoman. Miss Delamere eyed the poor girl from head to foot through her gold eye-glass. After some preliminary conversation, Miss Delamere said—

"You have a silk dress, I suppose."

Alice answered yes; she had two or three.

"We like our young people to dress in silk—all one colour, with as little pattern as possible."

Alice said she had a brown, which would be just what Miss Delamere wished.

"You know nothing of the business?"—Alice shook her head—"Then of course you are aware you must give six months of your time to learn it?"

Alice wondered if the little sum of money she had would last her as long—but she could not demur.

"You can come here to-morrow, then, if you like. And, by-the-bye, if you have a watch and chain—or a chain only—you may as well put it on."

Alice promised do so; and was about to go, when Miss Delamere recalled her.

"I forgot to tell you, Miss Carlyle, that I can allow no levity of conduct. I cannot permit anything of the sort. I have had to discharge several of my shop-girls for giggling at young men as they go by when they are dressing the windows of a-morning. I can have no young men dangling about outside the shop, staring. You perfectly understand that? The first time I notice anything of the sort, you go. Remember that!"

Alice saw no particular hardship in that; so the bargain was struck, and the next morning found Alice at the shop in her plain brown silk dress, and with her gold chain on. Miss Delamere expressed herself satisfied with her appearance.

"And now, Miss Carlyle, you may try your hand at dressing the window."

Alice set about her task at once, but found it far more



trying than she had expected. As she stood in the window arranging the bonnets, everyone who passed by stared hard at her; and some of the rude young clerks, on their way to their offices, winked or smiled at her impudently. Miss Delamere stood by, directing and advising, but she kept carefully out of sight, so poor Alice had to run the gauntlet of all the rude looks and leers, alone.

When she had finished the window, she was pleased to hear Miss Delamere express herself satisfied.

"Very good—very good indeed for a beginner. Done with great taste; but quite capable of improvement, Miss Carlyle, as I'll show you;" and then Miss Delamere pointed out some minor matters which needed alteration.

Then Alice was instructed in the mystery of the price-tickets, which, it appeared, were capable of several interpretations, according to the kind of purchaser. Each article was, in fact, fixed at a price with a certain margin, either for reduction or addition, as the buyer appeared able to pay or not. Miss Delamere explained to Alice that this system was not adopted with a view to making a gain, but simply because some ladies would not take a bonnet unless its cost was considerable; they would not believe the article was good—at all events, that it was not likely to become common,—unless they paid dearly for it. And I dare say there was a good deal of truth in this theory of Miss Delamere's, though I'm inclined to think she had other motives.

A weary, troublesome day was Alice's first day at the bonnet shop. It was just at the beginning of the season, and ladies were getting their new bonnets, so there was a rapid succession of customers. But, oh, what difficult people to manage those customers were! Women, in spite of their naturally tender dispositions, are cruelly and heartlessly pitiless to one another. Poor Alice ransacked the shop through and through again, while her customers sat blandly smiling, and perhaps after all selected the first article she had brought them.

About midday she and the other young ladies in the shop were summoned to dinner, which consisted of flabby beef and suet dumplings. Nothing but downright hunger would have induced Alice to eat such greasy and uninviting viands. She found her companions were in the habit of clubbing their halfpence to buy beer, and she joined them, for she really required some refreshing stimulant.

Her companions soon got into conversation with her, and it was very clear that they did not love Miss Delamere, or be-

lieve in the rigorous propriety which she professed. As for levity!—I grieve to say these young ladies had nicknames for all the regular passers-by—all the young clerks who daily went to their business. They had even made a sort of partition of them, and had allotted themselves so many apiece, as sweethearts, and spoke of them in endearing terms that would have startled Miss Delamere into hysterics.

A great deal of fun was made about Alice, and the mode in which she was to be supplied with a few sweethearts to begin with. Each of her friends offered to present her with one of hers; but as they would not part with any but the least prepossessing, it was self-evident that this arrangement was not a fair one. So it was agreed that they should let Alice draw one from each; and they had just written the nicknames on bits of paper, and Alice, who felt it would be best to keep on good terms with her shopmates, and therefore fell in at once with the proposition, was just about to begin drawing, when Miss Delamere's voice was heard at the top of the stairs.

"Young ladies, young ladies! A great deal too much noise. And, pray, how much longer are you going to be over your dinners?"

There was a general scurry and hustling away of lottery tickets, and the young ladies hastened up stairs, where Miss Delamere lectured them soundly one by one, telling each separately that she was the worst of the lot, and spoiling all the others, and that she (Miss Delamere) was determined not to keep her any longer.

As for Alice, Miss Delamere informed her privately that of course she did not include her in the condemnation, but she hoped "it would not occur again," and wished Miss Carlyle would try and influence the girls for their good. She (Miss Delamere) felt towards them all like a mother, and they pained and grieved her terribly at times.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## FOUND—AND LOST.

POOR James Trefusis might well hate the sight of a postman. He had ceased to regard that functionary in the light of a benefactor long ago, when he brought home at tedious intervals those rambling evasive missives from the Ordnance Office. Was not the Post Office, after all, only a Government office, and what had Government offices ever done for him that he should be grateful? No! they were all in league to harass and plague him, as a revenge for his venturing to disturb the blessed indolence of the Ordnance Office. He was to be pursued and hunted down, he persuaded himself, and he looked upon the postman as a persecutor.

And now he really had some reason to complain. He had just received a large official envelope, with that everlasting inscription, "On Her Majesty's Service;" but in addition to that too familiar sentence, there were other notifications on this cover. It was marked, "Returned Letter Branch, General Post Office," and furthermore stated to contain a "Returned *Paid* Letter."

In that cover was his last letter to Marian, addressed to her at Mr. Orr's.

James had been for some time at a loss to account for Marian's silence. Sunday after Sunday, he had gone to the old rendezvous in the park, but neither Marian nor Alice had appeared there. He could not understand it. At last he determined to write to Marian and ask her what had happened. Time went on and no answer came, and he was just thinking he would write again, and trying to persuade himself that he must have forgotten to post his epistle, or it must have been mislaid, when the returned letter reached him.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he asked himself, as he opened the official envelope and found his own missive scrawled over in various illegible hands, with all sorts of remarks, the spirit of which was, in brief, "Not known. Gone away, and left no address."

"What on earth is the meaning of this? They must surely know at the Orrs' where she is, even if she has left them. It must be some of the usual official stupidity on the part of the Post Office. I'm going into the City, and I'll call in at old Orr's office and inquire."

Accordingly, in the afternoon Mr. Trefusis's card was taken into Mr. Orr's gloomy sanctum in the City. Mr. Orr never refused to see callers who were not known to him, for fear, perhaps, of refusing to entertain angels—and by angels I mean gold coins, value about ten shillings sterling. Mr. Orr was always ready to turn a penny out of anyone or anything, and he therefore never refused to see those who called upon him, unless he knew them, and was pretty well sure there was nothing more to be got by cultivating their acquaintance. When you have squeezed an orange dry, what, I should like to know, is the use of clinging to the husk? "Fling it away by all means," would be Mr. Orr's advice; "but don't throw it on the pavement!"—not because some foot passenger may be thrown down and break his leg, but because being so thrown down and breaking his leg, he may come on you for damages if he can trace his calamity to you.

Mr. Orr, then, received James Trefusis courteously.

"Pray take a seat, Sir. Of what service can I be to you, Sir? In any way related to Sir Colman Trefusis, of Polmagenic?"

James remained standing, politely disavowed a relationship with Sir Colman, and briefly told Mr. Orr that the service he could do him consisted in his telling him what had become of his late governess, Miss Carlyle.

At this Mr. Orr began to turn red, and swell and wag his head like an irritated turkey-cock.

"The young woman had been seized with smallpox, and had been sent to the hospital."

"Could Mr. Orr tell him which hospital?" James inquired. Mr. Orr couldn't. He had left the affair in the hands of Mrs. Orr, who had placed it in the hands of the housekeeper.

"Had Mr. Orr any objection to allowing him to ask the housekeeper?" James persisted.

Mr. Orr had every objection. He did not choose to have his household worried and badgered about a person they didn't know or care anything about. Miss What's-her-name had been mixing in low society, and caught a complaint prevalent among common people, and brought it into his house—into Mr. Orr's house. He didn't know or wish to know anything about it. He didn't think she was better than she should be.

At that, James brought his fist down on the table within an inch of Mr. Orr's nose with a bang that made the magnate nearly jump out of his chair.

"Retract that this most moment, Sir. If you dare to breathe one word against that lady, I'll break every bone in your body. Beg pardon, Sir, this moment."

Mr. Orr looked towards the bell, but it was too far off, so he gobbled out a few words of apology.

"Now, Sir, before you rise, will you tell me all you know about Miss Carlyle?"

"Pon my soul I don't know any more. She was taken ill, and the housekeeper sent her away in a cab. That's all I know. It is upon my soul!"

"More shame for you, you hoary old villain—you respectable scoundrel. You, a man of your age, and a father, sent that poor orphan girl in such a state, alone—to her death. I've a great mind to knock your miserable old head against that iron safe there, which you make your god. For shame, you degraded old man. You cowardly murderer."

With these words James was striding out of the room, when Mr. Orr jumped up and ran to the bell.

"Now, by Gad, Sir," said the old coward, recovering courage with safety, "I've got you. What's to prevent my ringing the bell, and giving you in charge for assault, intimidation, attempted robbery?" and he foamed and spluttered in his excessive rage.

"What prevents you? Your own cowardice, Sir. Dare to do so, and I'll expose your conduct. I'll proclaim it in open court, and every newspaper in the land shall echo your shame—every place shall ring with your brutality."

The shot was a random one, but it told. "Those blackguard papers would rejoice," thought Mr. Orr, "in an opportunity of showing me up. It might be awkward." So he did not ring the bell, and allowed James to depart unmolested.

When he left Orr's, James started forth at once on a pilgrimage to the various hospitals in London. As my readers can understand he failed in finding any trace of Marian, although at one he learnt that a young girl, nearly answering the description he gave, had been brought in dying of scarlet fever—not smallpox—that she had died, and was buried, and that her name had not been discovered.

With what doubt and grief this filled the poor fellow's heart, I need not attempt to tell you. Was this then the end of his dream? Of what worth would all the most brilliant success be to him now? He had nothing left to live for, if in that nameless grave in unconsecrated soil lay all that remained of the woman he had so deeply and devotedly loved.

Fortunately, by some merciful provision, the human heart is slow indeed to give up hope, and James still clung to the belief that it could not be Marian who had died thus. He recalled and magnified all the little discrepancies in the story, until he half persuaded himself that it could not be she.

And so the time wore on wearily for James Trefusis, and he began to long for the evening when there should come a folding of hands and unbroken sleep.

Now that James had lost heart for the struggle, his brother-inventor, the old captain of artillery, began—half in hopes of rousing his companion, half because he could not bear to see it lying inactive—to stir about the gun.

It was clearly no use to go on trying to drive justice or common sense into the heads of the Ordnance Office authorities. The old soldier, not without a struggle between his ambition and his patriotism, determined to submit the invention to some of the foreign Governments. With this view he called in Charlie Crawhall's aid; and the hare-brained artist, so utterly impracticable on his own behalf, was wise, and prudent, and judicious in advising for another's benefit.

"Take it to the Emperor of the French, captain. He's the chap to appreciate a thing of this sort at a glance."

"How is it to be done?"

"Why Jim must go over to Paris, with an introduction to some of the swells there—he can easily get it from some of his swell directors—and he won't have much difficulty in getting an audience."

Thereupon the old captain explained to Charlie that James had of late fallen into a melancholy from which nothing could rouse him. Charlie was puzzled at this, but did not doubt but that he could discover the cause of this change. He took James on one side presently, and proposed a stroll in Greenwich Park. James did not care to go, but was at last prevailed upon. The old captain wanted a walk, too; so off they went in a body.

Now Charlie had proposed the stroll with a view to getting away from the old man—so all he could do was to give him a hint to wander away, and leave him and James together awhile.

Lying on the grass, pipe in mouth, Charlie cautiously tried to get at the cause of James's sorrow. Never was there such a picture of sorrow as the poor fellow looked now, sitting on the sloping bank, with his elbows on his knees, and his hands and head drooping listlessly.

It needed little on Charlie's part to persuade James to tell him his grief. The unhappy wretch was only too glad to pour out his troubles to some sympathising friend.

Charlie looked very grave throughout the recital, and did not seem to see any hope. All at once he sprang up, and seized James by the shoulder.

"Jim, Jim, old boy! Are you strong enough to bear good news—at least a hope—a chance?"

"Yes. What is it?" was the eager answer.

"You know Jack Bathurst, Jim—used to write for the *Weekly Storehouse*, and edited the *Friend of the Household* for Brownsmith? Well! he's doing a work on pauperism for Jones, and the other day he was to do a workhouse, and asked me to go with him, and I did. And, by Jove, there was a case of a girl they told us had been brought in in a cab—they didn't know where from or anything about her; and she had had smallpox, and was just recovering. They didn't know her name, but they said it was quite a mysterious case, she seemed such a superior style of girl to have no friends."

James Trefusis was all life and energy again now. He sprang up, and began to stride away. The captain was walking towards them, and met him.

"Good-bye, capt'n; I'm going!"

"Going! What to Paris about the gun?"

"Curse the gun!" said James, very heartily, as he hurried off to the railway station.

That afternoon poor Marian, waked out of her weary slumber by the touch of a kindly hand, opened her eyes and found James Trefusis standing by her, clasping her hand in his. It was no surprise to her, for as she lay on that wretched pallet she had long dreamed of waking up some day like this, either in this world or the next, and finding her lover by her.

But then came the terrible recollection of her disfigurement. She buried her face in the pillow. It was not vanity, for she had never fancied herself good-looking; it was rather pity for James, and fear lest he should think she had changed as well as her features.

They spoke little to each other, for the matron and the master were present. James had had some difficulty in persuading them to let him enter, and they watched him closely, as if they fancied he wanted to steal something. So James could only tell her by what chance he had learnt where she was, and how he intended to have her removed at once to some comfortable lodgings where she would be well cared for. And then he bent over her hand and kissed it, and went away.

He lost no time in getting lodgings for her. Fortunately, he had just been paid for some engineering work, and had a handsome sum of money by him. In a few days Marian was removed to her new home, where she was surrounded with every comfort he could think of for her. And as soon as she was settled he came to see her, and then heard for the first time all the story of her illness, and the full particulars of the brutal and heartless way in which the Orrs had turned her out.

Then he set to work to recover Marian's boxes, which he

supposed were at the Orrs'. But the Orr household were prepared to swear in a body that Miss Carlyle's boxes had been sent away with her. Then he applied to the workhouse people, and they referred him to that active and intelligent officer, A 299. But A 299, though he clearly remembered all the circumstances of the case, had omitted to take down the cabman's number, and did not think he should be able to recognise him. James threatened to report him, and offered to bribe him, but to no effect. Marian's little all had vanished.

Then James bethought him of an artifice which succeeded admirably. He gave Marian what he pretended was her salary paid by Mrs. Orr to him; and Marian in the innocence of her heart, took it without a question, to his great delight.

There was no necessity now for the old captain to urge James to take the gun and submit it to a foreign Government. At the first mention of the idea, James declared his intention of going at once. He had made up his mind now—it was useless to go on in this way any longer, leaving poor Marian to struggle alone in the world. He must make money as much as possible—and then they would marry.

He packed up his travelling tackle and set out for Paris at once. But before he left he wrote a letter to Marian, telling her his plans.

James Trefusis had never loved Marian for her beauty. If she was lovely to him, it was only because her good qualities made her so, not from any consciousness as to whether her features were classic and regular, or piquant and peculiar. The result was that, beyond the fact that she looked ill and weak, he hardly noticed the change in her, or if he noticed it, at all events did not think it worthy of a moment's thought.

But his silence on this point distressed Marian. The consciousness of the change was so constantly present to her that she fancied if he did not mention it, it was because he dared not trust himself to refer to what was such a grief to him. She thought that he felt bound in honour to keep the promise he had made, but that he had ceased to love her.

This fancy was always before her, and made her constantly misrepresent James's words and actions. So that now, when he went off in such haste to Paris, and wrote to take leave instead of coming to see her, she perceived in this, not his eagerness to overcome every obstacle to making her his, but his sad acquiescence in the results of his promise to marry her. He did not care to come and see her, but he wrote and took his leave, as in duty bound.

The more she brooded over this, the more she became con-



vinced of its truth. He had ceased to love her, and yet was about to offer up his life, his prospects, his happiness, in a mistaken sense of honour. It must not be. She, too, could make her sacrifice. She did love him—fondly, deeply, unselfishly; and she must not let him bind himself in sorrowful loyalty to a woman who was no longer dear to him.

She had made up her mind as to the bitter step she must take. She suffered as only a woman can suffer for the sake of the man she loves. If it be agony to see all we hold dear slipping from our grasp, what torture, self-inflicted, must it be to turn resolutely away from it, never to see it again.

Here was this woman, with the accomplishment of the dream of her life within her reach. Yet, with a martyr's courage, she refused to drink of the happiness almost touching her lip. She fled from the blessing for which she had sighed so long, with a sore heart and passionate weeping.

Meanwhile, James having procured all the letters of introduction and testimonials he required, set out for Paris. He had picked up the French language during his sojourn in that polyglot place, Bohemia, where he had been naturalised as a citizen of the world. He went out with great hope and high expectation, for he knew the French Emperor to be a wise and sagacious man, not at all likely to let so excellent an invention slip. He knew him also to be, if not a generous, at least not a niggardly paymaster. And then! Then home and happiness! He hoped to realise enough money by the invention to enable him to leave great, busy, bustling London for ever, to purchase some quiet corner in the country where he might live and die in peace and tranquil happiness.

As he leaned on the side of the steamer, gazing along the sun's track on the dancing waters, and pictured to himself a future path as golden and glorious as that, what was Marian doing?

She was getting stronger and better now. She was able to walk about a little, and could sit up. So she gathered together her few things, and packed them up and left her lodgings. She would go away and leave no trace behind—leave nothing behind but a short note, bidding him farewell. Then she would hide herself in some obscure corner of London, and there live and toil, and try to forget him. She had another task to do now, as soon as she was well enough. She must learn how Alice had fared. "Poor Alice, she must have wondered what had become of me. But I don't feel well enough to write to her to-day after all the hurry of moving," said Marian, as she lay down in her humble bed, in her new lodgings in Pentonville, where she had now determined to take up

her quarters until she had quite recovered, and was well enough to seek another situation.

By-and-by she wrote to Alice, but received no answer. Then she grew alarmed, and as soon as she was strong enough, journeyed painfully over to Mayfair to inquire about her. The footman of whom she asked for her sister was a new arrival, and had to go down into the servants' hall to learn what she wished to know. And it so happened that Alice's old ally, Martha, was in the kitchen when he came down. When she heard what the inquiry was, she peeped up from the area, and at once guessed who Marian was. So she tripped up the area steps and called to Marian to come to the gate. And then she told her how my lady had turned Alice away, "along of the Honnable Enery's a-falling in love with her." And that was all the information Marian could gather about her sister.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE FORGING OF GOLD FETTERS.

I FEAR my readers will lose much of their interest in Henry Vorian when I tell them that as soon as he found that Alice was gone and had not answered his note he was rather relieved than otherwise. In some love affairs it is rather obstinacy than passion that is so long-lived. When your friends say, "Oh, it will be broken off before very long," a premium is held out for fidelity—just as, when an old man sees that his life is the slender barrier between his heir and his property, he generally feels inspired to prolong his existence in the most unreasonable manner. In attachments, a little opposition on the part of friends is like picking the blossoms of a geranium, say—it destroys the beauty of the plant perhaps, but it strengthens it considerably.

Lord and Lady Lacquoigne seemed to have some intuitive perception of this, for as soon as the danger was removed by the dismissal of Alice, they tacitly received Henry Vorian into favour again—nay, perhaps were even more than usually gracious.

Meantime that gallant youth, deprived of the amusement which had served to occupy his spare time, grew to be bored by constant stopping at home, and at last, of his own accord, began to go into society again. As soon as he showed this in-

clination, his noble parents humoured it to the best of their power. They gave all sorts of entertainments, and went to great expense. If you had asked where was the money for this to be procured, echo in the groves of Beaudechet would have answered—like that creature which it most resembles, a “silent M.P.”—“Here, here!” The Dryads had to suffer. My lord’s steward was directed to sell some timber as promptly as possible, and many a gap in the dwindling avenues of the once noble park stood like a notch in a clog-almanack to represent some festal day at the mansion in Mayfair.

At all the gaieties which my lord and my lady provided, one family was constantly present. The Orrs were always invited, and never failed to come. The yellow chariot was perpetually running to and fro between Grosvenor Place and Mayfair. The canary-coloured became very intimate with the Lacquoigne domestics.

But all this labour and expense seemed in vain. In vain my lord and my lady coupled Henry Vorian and pink-eyed Honoria Orr in a social leash. In vain Mr. and Mrs. Orr figuratively threw their daughter at the future nobleman’s head; *he* didn’t seem to see it, and *she* didn’t seem to see it.

What was to be done? His lordship felt inclined to remonstrate with his son for refusing to let him have interest for this heavy investment in the matrimonial speculative line. But my lady was wiser, and counselled silence, patience, and an interview with Mr. Serooby.

Accordingly, Mr. Serooby was honoured by a visit from his lordship, who laid the matter before him, and asked his advice.

“You say, my lord,” said Mr. Serooby, leaning back in his chair, and fixing a contemplative eye on the hook in the middle of the ceiling where a chandelier had once hung; “you say, my lord, that the Honourable Henry must marry well on account of his debts. Has your lordship any notion of their extent?”

“Well, no, Serooby, I can’t say I have; for I have purposely made it a rule to abstain from making inquiries about difficulties I could not assist him to meet.”

“Very right, my lord. But at this time a little knowledge of the state of his affairs would be very useful.”

“In what way, Serooby?”

“My lord,” said Serooby, winking at the chandelier-hook, because he felt he ought not to take such a liberty with a nobleman; “my lord, I have a very pretty little scheme for bringing about this desirable consummation.”

“By Jove, have you now? How devilish quick you’ve

been about it! What a clever fellow you are, Scrooby—doosid clever! You ought to be in the House—you ought, indeed, with your ability."

"I'm too clever to desire to enter it, my lord. But about this plan—it is very simple. It is on the principle of a battue. You want to flush your bird, so you set your beaters to work, and in a little while—whirr! up my gentleman goes, and you knock him over with this eligible match, having, of course, taken out a license for such sport at Doctors' Commons. Ha! ha! not a bad joke that, my lord, for a poor lawyer."

"Doosid good, doosid good," said my lord, quite in a fog as to the real meaning of this figurative language.

"Do you take what I mean, my lord?" asked Scrooby, observing the mystification of his noble client.

"Well, I'm cursed if I do, if it comes to that," said the other with candour.

"Let me explain to your lordship. What I should do in your case would be to buy up a few of the Honourable Henry's acceptances—press him for payment—get him into a corner for want of money, and then just offer him the chance of the young lady's hand and fortune; and if he don't jump at it, I'll be struck off the rolls for an incompetent ass."

"Gad! that's very clever, Scrooby—very clever. But what will it cost to buy up these acceptances? You see I've been laying out a good deal of money on this already."

"Well, I think, my lord, if you will permit me to say so, that the Honourable Henry's acceptances will not be a very expensive purchase. If your lordship wishes it, I'll look about and get hold of a few."

"Yes, but you know, Scrooby, it won't do for us to be pressing him. He knows——"

"Oh, bless you, my lord, I'm not such a fool as to appear in the matter at all. I can get a little Hebrew of my acquaintance to play the part of Shylock, 'his original character,' as the playbills say, so as to corner the Honourable Henry, without waking a single suspicion."

His lordship gave Scrooby the necessary instructions, and that shrewd man of business set about his little plan at once. He delighted in such small strokes of finesse—legal niceties, he called them. It was not long before he discovered quite a nest of the Honourable Harry Vorian's acceptances. They had all got into the hands of one man, who probably got them at a reduction on taking the quantity, though they were cheap enough under any circumstances, I should think, being quoted very low in the market. The speculator who had collected them was not very elate with his bargain, and was, in fact,

rather in the position of those who have greatness thrust upon them. He didn't want so many autographs of the heir of Lacquoigne, but they somehow seemed to have a tendency to fall into his hands. The *Milvus Regalis* of natural history is not a gregarious bird, I believe, but the common kite of the discounting naturalist is given to fly in flocks.

Mr. Scrooby purchased a few specimens of this interesting tribe, and caged them in a tin box in his office until the arrival of his Jewish friend, who may be described as a financial bird-fancier, not only for the sake of carrying out the natural historical figure I have fallen into, but because he really looked like what a bird-fancier should be, if there be any truth in the allegation that a man becomes assimilated to his profession. To judge this Israelite according to this maxim, from the length of talon and crookedness of beak, one would set him down as a seller, not exactly of doves, but of vultures and carrion birds generally.

As he stood in Scrooby's office, with his bald head a little on one side, with his small eyes twinkling, and his shoulders elevated to his ears like folded pinions, he might well have stood for the Darwinian development of a very acquisitive buzzard or bald-headed vulture, watching the death-struggle of some unfortunate animal with hungry interest. The resemblance was so striking that when Scrooby explained that after all the acceptances were not to be used really to smash up the Hon. Captain Vorian, the Hebrew looked quite disappointed, and gave such a croak of remonstrance as one would expect from a bird of prey that sees the dinner it has been counting upon carried off by a scavenger.

A few days after this interview of Mr. Scrooby with Mr. Slowman, Henry Vorian began to find that if "curses, like chickens, come home to roost," those other curses, kites, are not less certain to come back to the place whence they started. He heard for the first time of the existence of a certain Mr. Levy Slowman, and learnt that after many years spent in rendering pecuniary assistance to his distressed fellow-creatures at fifty per cent., that generous person was about to retire from the active practice of benevolence at a lucrative rate of interest, and was therefore anxious to come to some arrangement with the Honourable Captain Vorian with regard to some paper of his which had come into the beneficent Hebrew's hands.

Henry Vorian, with a strange want of comprehension of this generous being's nature, got into a state of alarm and apprehension. He struggled to extricate himself from the friendly clutches, like an improvident blue-bottle kicking to get out of the web of some discounting spider. But it was all in vain.

His efforts to extricate himself only involved him more and more hopelessly in the meshes. At last, exhausted by his great exertions, he lay quite still, waiting for his destroyer to begin sucking his lifeblood. Yet the destroyer seemed to be in no hurry. The suspense was agony to Henry Vorian; but he little knew how agonising it was to his tormentor too, or he would have been perhaps a little consoled.

Poor Slowman must have felt like one of those cormorants trained by the Chinese to catch fish. The poor bird pursues his finny prey by instinct, pounces on it, and, bringing it to the surface, proceeds to swallow it; but the cruel ingenuity of John Chinaman steps in here, and by putting a close-fitting brass ring round the bird's neck, incapacitates the unhappy cormorant from the crowning act of his performance. His enjoyment of the fish can never be anything beyond the mere tickling of his œsophagus with its nose. To bolt it is out of his power.

Scrooby had put a figurative brass ring round the gullet of this Jewish cormorant, and the hungry creature stood with Captain Vorian over head and shoulders in his debt and in his maw, and yet he might not bolt him.

"Torment him as much as you like--put the screw on all but the last turn," said Lord Lacquoigne's lawyer; and the vindictive Slowman made the most of the permission. The result was, as might be expected, that Henry Vorian at last was driven to speak to his father.

My lord was—instructed by my lady—rather cold and impracticable at first. "He regretted—he feared—he deplored"—in short, he did everything except what Henry wanted. He did not offer to aid. At length driven to the point by his father's indifference, the captain asked for assistance.

"My dear Henry," said his lordship, gravely, "I think I remember telling you, during an interview which I will not pain you by referring to further, that I had your brothers and sisters to provide for."

"You did, Sir," answered Henry, moodily.

"I then gave you the best counsel I could, but you did not think fit to regard it in a proper spirit; and you must therefore excuse me if I decline to obtrude advice where it is not appreciated."

"I shall not only appreciate but be deeply grateful for your advice now, Sir."

"I can only repeat the advice I gave then. A young man of birth and position must marry a wealthy wife, if he wishes to take his right place. If he has become involved in debt, the necessity for doing so is still more imperative."

Henry Vorian confessed to himself that there was a great deal of truth in that.

"Few young men have such excellent opportunities as you have of making a good match. The intimate relations subsisting between us and the Orrs give you advantages——"

"But she's so confoundedly ugly; and there's nothing in her."

"All the better. Girls with nothing in them are less trouble to manage; and as for good looks, a man who marries for beauty marries for a very shortlived inducement; whereas a man who marries a girl with money is investing to advantage, for it will be in his power to increase that fortune by good management. As to beauty, it's cheap enough, and there's plenty of it about."

Henry Vorian began to think that, after all, his father knew best, and the advice he gave was very sound. But just at this moment a certain recollection flashed across him, and he looked a little blank.

"What's the objection now?" asked his lordship, observing the alteration.

"Well, you see—why, the fact is, you see—why, unluckily, in the heat of the moment, after the interview which you spoke of just now, I wrote a letter to—to that—the young lady in question, in which I pledged myself in a manner which might be—a—a—awkward, in case I married again—I mean anybody else!"

"Oh, you wrote a letter, did you, making a formal promise of marriage, eh?"

"Yes, I think it might have amounted to that."

"And you wish you had'n't now, don't you?"

Henry Vorian was compelled to admit that he could have wished the letter recalled.

"Then I'm afraid," said his lordship, "that marriage is out of the question as a means of extricating you from your difficulties; and yet I candidly tell you I see no other way."

Henry Vorian frowned, and bit his lip savagely.

"The mere rumour that you were engaged to Mr. Orr's eldest daughter would at once silence your creditors. Don't you think it would?"

"Beyond a doubt."

"I suppose you heartily wish you had never written that foolish letter?"

"Well—yes, I do."

"You'd like to destroy it?"

Henry nodded.

"There it is, then," said my lord, throwing the letter over to him.

Henry Vorian started as if a bombshell had fallen at his feet.

"How on earth did you become possessed of this?"

"Your mother bought it of the girl when she was going away. She consented to discount it; it was rather expensive."

Now this, as we know, my dear reader, was what I must take the liberty of calling "a lie," although it was told by a lord. But I hope and believe that his lordship soared to fiction just this once in order to shield her ladyship, who had really abstracted the letter from the letter-box. That act was nothing more or less than petty larceny, and perhaps his lordship thought that a nobleman did not so much lose caste by telling a lie as committing a theft. For my part, I can see very little difference between the two acts.

Henry Vorian was too pleased to get back a letter which he had for some time admitted to himself was an injudicious one, to make too nice inquiries as to how it came into his father's possession. He accepted his lordship's account without question, and felt reason to be grateful that he had got off so cheaply, considering what a mercenary creature Miss Carlyle must have been to part with that letter in order to realise a little sum of money!

From this time Captain Henry Vorian began to pay the usual sort of attentions to Miss Orr; and she accepted them. By-and-by it was an understood thing that the young people were not to be interfered with. Then came the proposal and acceptance. After these followed the interviews of parents and the sketching of the settlements. Last of all came the marriage.

It was a rule in the composition of the tragic drama of the classics that all terrible things should be done behind the scenes, and not on the stage; and if Medea was forbidden by the etiquette of the Dramatic Authors' Society in the time of Horace to kill her children close to the footlights—if Atreus was not permitted to perform his cannibal cuisine anywhere within the limits between P. and O.P.—if Procne was not allowed to go through her transformation scene into a dove publicly, and Cadmus was strictly prohibited from turning into a serpent visibly and to soft music—why should a novelist be suffered to harrow his readers by the description of a human sacrifice?

I, for one, won't attempt it. But standing C., and looking off, after the wont of that garrulous party the Chorus of Greek Drama, I will inform you that I see carriages with gray horses, and postillions with white rosettes, outside Mr Orr's house in Grosvenor Place—that I see a solemn proces-



sion made to a temple in the neighbourhood of Hanover Square, at which temple the human sacrifice is gone through amid much weeping of women and general depression and misery—that I see, on their return to Mr. Orr's, a great pagan feast, at which the party undergo the slow torture of hearing and making speeches—that I see more tears and hysterics and faintings; and that the *Times* of the next day announces the union of the heir to the Lacquoigne title and the daughter of Mr. Orr, M.P. and millionaire.

But I do hope you will give me credit, though I jest at this wedding, for an opinion on the subject of such marriages, which is by no means a thing to be laughed at. If there be a proof wanted of the depravity of the human heart and the godlessness of our boasted civilisation, I should look for it in the spectacle of two people standing before the altar and taking part in that touching and most solemn marriage ceremony—professing an affection they do not feel, vowing vows they do not intend to keep, and joining hands where God has not joined the hearts!

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### SINKING LOWER.

ONE morning, when Alice had been at Miss Delamere's about a month, she was arranging the windows, with Miss Delamere in the background, out of sight, superintending. All at once she became conscious that some one who was standing outside was looking at her intently. Raising her eyes to discover who it could be—for the feeling was not a pleasant one—she beheld Captain Cormack!

The surprise was mutual. Captain Cormack was strolling by the shop, and, seeing several girls in the window, devoted a few minutes to an inspection of their points, to their great amusement, and the consternation and anger of Miss Delamere. When he saw Alice engaged in such an employment, his astonishment was indeed great.

His first impulse, very naturally, was to walk into the shop, and shake hands with Alice; and she, delighted to see an old friend, and quite forgetful of Delamere's deportment, came forward and greeted him warmly. But the interview did not last long, for Alice suddenly woke to a sense of her posi-

tion and a knowledge of what Miss Delamere would think of "such forward ways." Thereupon she huddled the captain out of the shop, and begged him to go away. But he did not consent to this until he had learnt at what time she left business, and how far she lived from the shop. He promised to be close at hand to escort her home, and have a long talk with her.

When he was gone, Alice had to suffer for her imprudence. All the vials of Miss Delamere's wrath were poured on her devoted head. Captain Cormack's impudent inspection of her shop girls had not predisposed that lady in his favour; and she had, moreover, a pretty extensive experience, and had little difficulty in estimating his character from his manner and appearance. So she came into action with all her guns loaded to the muzzle, and delivered such broadsides of invective against poor Alice that the unhappy girl was beaten in a minute. She could only say that the gentleman was a very old friend of her father's and had not seen her for years.

"Well, it's my opinion, Miss Carlyle," said Miss Delamere, severely, "if he had never seen you at all, it would be all the better, for I'm sure he is not the right sort of man for a young and interesting girl to have much to do with. I disapprove of my young ladies having male acquaintances—especially such as him—and most especially I won't have them receiving callers in my shop! Understand that clearly, Miss Carlyle. If this occurs again, you and I must part."

As ill-luck would have it, Miss Delamere was reaching a bonnet out of the window that evening when Captain Cormack came to wait until Alice left. Miss Delamere said nothing, though she was angry enough, for he had the audacity to favour her with a passing leer as he went by. She waited until Alice left, and then watched her until she joined Captain Cormack, and they walked away arm-in-arm.

Alice's taste and refinement had been strong recommendations to Miss Delamere; but the honour of her reputation was that lady's paramount anxiety; so she quietly determined to get some one to supply Alice's place as speedily as possible, and in the meantime made up her mind to watch and say nothing.

In the interval between his meeting with Alice in the morning and his return in the evening, Captain Cormack had had ample time to reflect and lay his plans. One thing was very plain to him. Marian could not have told Alice that she had suspected him of being more or less instrumental in causing her father's death. He must find out how much she had really told Alice.

When Alice came out of the shop, he joined her, and, offering his arm, begged to be allowed to see her home. She very innocently consented; and so they wandered off, to the horror, as we have seen, of the respectable Miss Delamere, and the forfeiture of Alice's situation.

Henry Cormack opened the conversation by artfully inquiring about Marian, and was very delighted to hear that Alice had lost sight of her. He then began to sound her carefully as to the extent to which Marian had gone in her description of his conduct, and he took the opportunity of regretting that his good intentions had been so sadly misconstrued. It was his object, he explained to Alice, to get the business clearly and entirely into his own hands on her father's death, in order that the creditors of her father might understand that that property was not liable for his debts. When he had once established that, he meant to restore them the half-share in the business. He complained that all his friendly schemes were frustrated by their secret and sudden departure, and expressed a hope that Alice would allow him to remove the unfavourable impression of him which her sister had conveyed to her.

He found, to his delight, that Alice had heard little, if anything, of what he had said and done in his interview with Marian, and he was a little flattered to find that the impression he had once made on Alice was quite susceptible of being worked upon.

From that day he was always hovering about Miss Delamere's shop, and never once missed the hour of closing, when he escorted Alice home.

Alice was pretty well teased by her shop-companions about "the swell with a moustache," and did not altogether dislike it. She was flattered by Henry Cormack's attention, and her friendless condition made her all the more ready to cling to the memory of better days which was embodied in his devotion. Henry Cormack saw all this, and, like the villain he was, determined to profit by it. And the respectable and rigorous Miss Delamere—let us hope quite unintentionally—played into his hands. For one day she intimated to Alice that the character of her shop, which had ever stood very high with her customers and her neighbours, was suffering by such extraordinary conduct as Alice was guilty of, in allowing a young man to wait for her, evening after evening, and walk away with her. The scandal such behaviour had given rise to was quite awful, and the hitherto unblemished reputation of Miss Delamere's model establishment was in danger. "Miss Carlyle must leave at once." Thereupon Alice was shown to

the door, and departed in an utter state of bewilderment and distress.

"What had she done? What could she do? To whom could she go for advice?" To whom, alas, but the man who had been the cause of this. He came to her lodgings that night. He had watched and waited when Miss Delamere's establishment was closed, and had come to the conclusion that she was ill, and therefore called to inquire after her health.

Alice told him what had happened, whereupon he feigned great grief and anger. But inwardly he was rejoiced. Chance, in this instance, had revealed to him the course he must adopt to obtain his wicked end. By doing of *malice prepense* what he had accidentally done in this case, he would be able to shut all respectable employment against Alice. It was a splendid device, and he was, no doubt, duly grateful to his friend and ally, the devil, for suggesting it.

He lost no time in carrying on his scheme. Under the pretence of wishing to talk over with Alice what might be done to get her some employment, he contrived to induce her to admit him to her lodgings. They had been standing talking at the door for some time, and they could consider the case to greater advantage within.

He thought it advisable to tell Alice that he was profoundly grieved to think that just at the time when he could have been of service to her, he had reduced himself almost to beggary by a mining speculation;—and he described the state of Wheal Cormack, with such additions and suppressions—for instance of its success—as he deemed necessary. He had mortgaged the foundry, and was nearly penniless, he told her, but he hoped before long to be able to recover the blow. Until then she must manage to get a living somehow, but he assured her his first good fortune should be shared by her.

He stayed for about half an hour, and then left, promising to call next day, when he hoped to be able to offer her something in the shape of employment.

No sooner had the door closed on him, than Alice's landlady made her appearance. Very red and angry she looked, and she spoke loud—and Alice's heart sank within her.

"No, never had such goings on took place in her house afore, nor never should. To think of a young unmarried female arsking of a gentleman into her room, which it was not a thing she would do herself was it ever so, not for thousands. And suit herself she must, which the sooner the better, and might go to-morrow, and not a shilling should be arsked for the three days; for though poor she would rather

be respectable than make ever so much money as she couldn't look in the face of, and say as it was earned respectable."

With more volubility than intelligibility, the worthy laundress beset Alice without ceasing, except to divert the torrent of her wrath for the benefit of her daughter, who had first brought Alice to the house.

The girl was as much horrified at Alice's indiscretion as her mother, and kept aloof from her quondam friend, so that when Mrs. Smart had finished her harangue, Alice was left all alone to bewail her fate, and cry herself to sleep as best she might.

The next day Captain Cormack called, but was received at the door by the laundress in person, and upbraided for daring to darken that respectable piece of timber. He was a little unprepared for such an outburst, but he soon recovered himself, and gave the good woman a rating in return.

Alice came out in bonnet and shawl in the midst of the tumult; and so the field was left with Mrs. Smart, the captain accompanying Alice for a walk.

When he learnt what had occurred after his departure, he was exceedingly pained, he said. But he feared they should have to bear much trouble, and suffer from such misapprehension frequently. Would Alice allow him to go and look about for apartments for her?—it would be easier for him, as a man, to get such a lodging as she required. In the meantime she could employ herself in endeavouring to find employment.

They separated on the understanding that they should meet next day in the park—Alice fixing on the old rendezvous—and report progress to each other.

For two days Captain Cormack declared himself unable to find such lodgings as Alice required. He said that almost universal objection was taken on his stating that he wished to call to see her occasionally, although he was no relation.

"You see, Alice, I thought it was best to tell the truth, but I'm afraid one doesn't get any good by it." It was not often that Henry Cormack was a martyr on that ground.

At last, on the third day, he professed to have met with a chance of rooms such as might suit Alice. But there was one slight objection to them.

"You see, my dear Alice, people are so confoundedly wicked in their extra goodness that they will see harm where there is none—and so I have had all this difficulty about getting you a lodging, just because, as a friend of your father's and your own, I wish to watch over your welfare as far as lies in my power. And this house is the only one where

no objection was raised. But then unfortunately, every good has its corresponding evil, and as they don't object to our arrangements, so they are not very particular about other people. And the fact is that there is a French opera dancer residing in the same house. Of course you needn't know her or see her—although I believe there is nothing really to be said against her. But continental people are so different from us, and there's a prejudice against theatrical people. You know, of course, my dear girl, that the memory of old times and my love for your father is a sufficient guarantee against my exposing you to anything you ought to be guarded against. But you can keep quite secluded, and I shall be at hand to see that you are safe."

Alice was beginning to lose courage and spirit, and her only hope and trust lay in this man now. So she allowed him to decide for her, and the next day left her quiet, clean little room in the poor street, for a dingy parlour in a pretentious row of houses in Chelsea. She was quite surprised at the low rent she had to pay ;—she did not know that Captain Cornack had made an arrangement with the landlady to pay the difference between the real rent and what he told her it was. Alice saw nothing of the opera dancer, who kept rather late hours (which was not her fault, because theatres *are* late places), and who, being sprung of a volatile nation, was noisy as French people will be at times.

In the meantime poor Alice had hunted high and low in search of employment, but in vain. It is difficult at any time for a woman to find work when she has an excellent character. But Miss Delamere refused to allow Alice to refer anyone to her, and the result was that, thanks to this rigorously virtuous and respectable woman, all paths save one were becoming closed against Alice.

When Captain Cormack had seen Alice fairly settled in her new abode, he told her he must run down into Cornwall for a week, in order to see how his business was going on ; but he begged her to let him lend her a small sum of money—he had just been paid a debt rather unexpectedly—and he forced a few pounds on her. When he left the house that day there was an evil smile on his face.

"Let's see how it will work ! I'll leave her there a bit by herself. Let's see how it will work !"

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

“ADIEU FOR EVERMORE, MY LOVE!”

WITH his heart filled with delightful dreams of the future—visions of bliss, and peace, and home with the woman who at that very moment was flying from him, James Trefusis cared little for the thousand and one delights which Paris, the queen of cities, offers to its visitors. He hardly noted its beauties, as he hurried along the splendid boulevards, as busy and thoughtful as if he had been hastening along Fleet Street or Cheapside. I think if Charlie Crawhall could have seen this incivility to the fair city he would never have forgiven James; for Charlie's notions of an earthly Paradise were embodied in bewitching Paris.

“By Jove, Jim,” he said as he shook his friend by the hand on his departure for France, “I'm a contented chap, as a rule, and break the tenth commandment as seldom as any man, but I do envy you your trip to Paris. Ah! that life out of doors, those piquant little dinners at the restaurant, so cheap and so nice; those charming theatres, those exquisite toilettes, those noble streets, and that glorious climate. Egad, whenever I come back from Paris I feel just as the fairies at the theatres must feel when the transformation scene's over, and they doff tinsel and wings for ragged bonnets and shawls. I feel as if I ceased to be a nobleman, and fell to a beggar—as if I quitted a land where all is prosperity, for one where the people are dressed like scarecrows!”

Little did Charlie guess the truth when he indulged over his pipe of an evening in conjectures of what James was doing, and how he was enjoying himself.

For James had a purpose, and when a man has that before him he does not stop to watch butterflies, or to smell flowers, or to admire landscapes, but just pushes straight on.

He found, at the commencement of his task, that after all he had some difficulties to overcome even here. French Government bureaux were, he discovered, not so very unlike English Government offices. But there was this difference in France, that he could appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober—from a bureaucrat intoxicated with a little power, to the clear, cool head of a really clever man—one who had all the advantages and none of the drawbacks of porphyrogeniture; for he was born to wealth and position, but educated in poverty and

obscurity. It is not everyone, equally fortunate in his birth-right, is as lucky in his schoolmasters as Napoleon III.

In spite, therefore, of a little unavoidable delay at the outset, James at last succeeded in drawing attention to his wares, which were just the sort of wares to please the ruler of an intensely military nation. The gun was seen and approved in theory, and it was resolved that it should be tested. James was to superintend the construction of a gun on these principles at the Government factories.

This was naturally a work of time, for the construction needed nicety and precision, and the workmen were not very apt. It is curious to observe how a really intelligent mechanic seems thrown out of his element—becomes almost useless when you take him out of the peculiar groove in which he has been accustomed to work for any length of time.

Labour is Conservative, and it is an extremely difficult task to prevail on any workmen—no matter what their particular occupation is—to depart even a hair's breadth from the long-established but often foolish traditions of their trade.

But in spite of this, and the further fact that his being an Englishman did not assist him in enlisting their sympathies and stimulating their exertions, James at length contrived to get his men into working trim, and finally cast the gun with considerable success.

Then came the trial, which took place almost privately, and was fair, though searching. The result was so far satisfactory that the gun was to be tested in comparison with other approved cannon in use in the French service. Out of this ordeal, too, the Trefusis gun came with flying colours, James being even complimented on the excellence of his invention by the Emperor himself.

Then came the negotiations for the purchase of the invention. There was no niggardliness or bargain-driving in the offer made to James, but yet he was very disinclined to accept it, for one of the stipulations of the purchase was that he was to remain in Paris for a couple of years—at a handsome salary, to be sure—in order to superintend the construction of the gun, and teach the workmen at the Government factories.

But the condition was so obviously fair and rational under the circumstances of the case, that James could not demur. So he made up his mind to accept the terms and undertake the duties. He could easily obtain leave of absence to run over to England, where he could marry Marian, and bring her over to Paris with him.

It took him, of course, some time to get his men sufficiently *au fait* with their work to allow of his leaving them even for



a short time. But French artisans are quick and intelligent, and he was not so long as he had expected in getting his factory into good working order.

Then he applied for a short leave of absence, and hastened over to England. He had written frequently to Marian, but none of his letters had elicited an answer. At first he fancied she might be very busy—then he feared she might be very ill—finally he became most anxious and alarmed at her silence, not knowing how he could account for it.

Immediately on his arrival in London, he hurried off to the lodgings where he had left Marian. A vague, indescribable prescience of evil struck him as he stood at the door of the house, after knocking. A diminutive and dirty servant girl presently opened the door.

"Is Miss Carlyle at home?" asked James.

"There aint no such pusson 'ere," was the answer, spoken somewhat angrily, for your London Cinderella objects to being summoned to the door without reason—and no wonder, for she is sufficiently worked off her legs without having to run on bootless errands.

"Stop a moment," said James, promptly putting his foot in the door to prevent the girl's closing it, for she did not wait a minute after giving her reply.

"I'll call the p'lice, if you don't go along. I know yer ways. But you aint agoin' to have them coats and umbrellers, young man; so you'd better 'ook it," said Cinderella, still struggling to shut him out.

"Confound the girl! Don't be such a fool! Where's your mistress?" expostulated James.

"Oh, she's down stairs, and I aint a-goin' to fetch her unless you let me shut the door."

But this James objected to do, for he argued—and perhaps justly—that the door once closed, Cinderella would dismiss him and his desires from her mind.

"Well, call her then, you stupid girl."

Thereupon the grumpy domestic, pitching her voice in a shrill pervading key, shrieked "Please 'm y'r wanted!"

At this summons the landlady ascended from the kitchen, and to her James quickly made his errand intelligible. She remembered him, and apologised to him for the servant's behaviour, which she excused on the ground that she was a new comer.

James said the girl was quite right, and was only doing her duty in seeing after the safety of her mistress's property; but he admitted it had made matters a little awkward for him. Then he inquired for Marian.

"Law, Sir! there; I thought you must have seen the lady again by this time. Bless you, she left here soon as ever she was well enough to move about. I had a note here for you for several weeks, Sir, in case you called, but as you didn't come, I supposed you'd seen the lady herself. I'm afraid I burnt it, or else I've put it away somewhere, but where I can't recall. But if you don't mind stepping in and taking a seat in the parlour, I'll look and see if I can find it."

"Did Miss Carlyle leave her address?" James inquired.

"No, Sir, that she didn't. I asked her for it in case of letters, but she said none wouldn't come, and if they did they would not be very pressing, and she'd call for them. But she never has, and I've got several waiting for her that came from foreign parts."

"Have you no idea where she was going? Didn't you hear the direction she gave the cabman?"

"Well, I did listen to try and hear, but bless you, Sir, she told him to drive in the direction of King's Cross, which, this being Bayswater, is rather wide, and you might spend a good deal of time between the two places in searching of her out."

"How strange! She gave you no reason for going?"

"None in the world, Sir, but it was no fault in the lodgings, for she told me as much herself. But may be, Sir, it will all be in that letter to you, so won't you just step in and take a chair while I hunt for it? for I'm pretty near persuaded that I shouldn't have burnt such a thing."

James accepted the invitation, and sat in the good woman's parlour while she prosecuted a vigorous search for the missing letter. If he had been in a mood to be amused, he would have found endless fun in the ransacking of old boards which ensued. It was clear that, when she suggested that she might have burnt the letter, she was inventing an excuse in case she could not find it in her curious collection of odds and ends. She was not the woman to burn any scrap of paper, no matter how valueless really. The places in which she had secret stores of bills and letters were innumerable. Papers were hidden in teapots and chimney ornaments. They were brought up after energetic plunges from the depths of China jars. They burst out as if from repression and captivity whenever a drawer was opened. They fluttered out of every cupboard. They came out rather flattened and creased from beneath the sofa cushion—rather dusty and crumpled from behind books on the shelves. They were disentangled from the threads and worsteds of a rather disorderly workbox. They were to be found even in the tea-caddy. They dropped out of the family Bible when it was held up by the two covers, and would have

done the same from almost every other book in the place, if one might judge from the bulgy and gaping appearance of most of the volumes. The looking-glass was stuck full of them.

"I must have a burn some of these days," said the landlady apologetically, after revealing some more than ordinarily gigantic accumulation in some very unexpected and unsuitable receptacle: "but you see it is so unsafe unless you go through them careful, receipts being very valuable, through persons coming only too often for their bills twice over—not always intentionally dishonest; but that don't matter to you, so long as you have to pay over again."

This was the secret of the good woman's magpie-board of useless paper! She did not like to burn anything in the shape of manufactured rag for fear of destroying a receipt. But, as a result, anyone of her tradespeople might have demanded payment of an account half a dozen times over, for the receipt could never have been found, in order to disprove the claim, within any reasonable time—say, half a lifetime.

At last, very flushed and very dusty, she was compelled to give up the search.

"There, I've hunted high and low, but here it isn't, and where it can be I know no more than the babe unborn, though it can't be lost, nor yet destroyed. But I dare say it will turn up some day, if you'll leave me your address where to send it."

James probably calculated on the chance of the address being discoverable at the time when the letter should turn up, for he did not attempt to write one out for her.

All of a sudden the landlady seemed to be seized with a fit of insanity, for she sprang from her chair, clapped her hands together, and cried out with a loud voice, "Law bless us! Mary Magdalen!"

Before James could make any conjecture as to the meaning of this historical allusion, she had caught up from the side-board, or rather chiffonier, a little old Chelsea china figure, which represented a female in a green robe of classical cut embracing a sort of tea-urn. Promptly inverting this image, the landlady plunged her hand into the pedestal, and drew forth a letter, which on inspection turned out to be the very one she was in search of. Mary Magdalen having been restored to her normal position, the letter was delivered to James.

He opened it with a trembling hand, and read as follows:—

"My dear, very dear James—

"Your noble and generous conduct touches me to the heart, and I cannot do otherwise than strive to emulate the self-sacrifice you propose. I

cannot but feel that my disfigurement must be the death-blow of the love I have so little deserved, and I admire you more than ever for the kindness which spared to tell me of the change, and for the heroism which would have adhered to an engagement that you considered with a mistaken sense of honour was still binding on you.

"You are free, dear! This poor scarred, disfigured creature, is not the woman to whom you plighted faith. Farewell!

"This wrings my heart. But in leaving you unfettered, and hiding my existence where you can never find me, I am following your example—and I know no better example. I am doing my duty.

"But I shall take away with me the comfort of the recollection of your goodness and your love. You have been far better to me always than I deserved. When I was well off and you were poor I had not the sense to know your worth or the courage to show my appreciation of it. When our places were changed, you shamed me with your noble conduct. You must not humble me more. You must not humble yourself more.

"You must forget—and yet I don't wish you to forget me utterly. So think of the Marian Carlyle you once loved—the girl who died of smallpox in the hospital. Forget only the living corpse you pitied for the sake of the dead. Forget the wretched, loathsome, disfigured creature that should be resting in the grave—that should have been buried, so as not to haunt your loyal heart with the semblance—the mockery of one you loved.

"Good-bye. God bless you! Don't try to find me, for you cannot succeed. I always pray for you.

"Yours, yet yours no longer,

"**MARIAN.**"

When James Trefusis read that, his heart died within him.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

"AN INTERVAL OF SEVERAL YEARS IS SUPPOSED TO ELAPSE."

THE dramatic device for avoiding the dull recital of not very interesting or not very important events, is one that may be adopted now and then by a novelist with advantage. Indeed, if he desire to be truthful and yet to spare his readers much dry unnecessary detail, he must have recourse to this method. For, with all deference to fair Rosalind and her illustrious literary parent, Time is too great a personage to be bound down by strict rules, and therefore her catalogue of his paces is not entirely reliable. There are seasons when he seems to fold his wings and take a nap, with his head resting on his hour-glass for a pillow, the which being laid horizontally, its sands cease to flow. And yet these dozes are not less often taken in the sun than in the shade. He sleeps over our happiness, as he sleeps over our misery, utterly careless in his lofty nature whether we weep or laugh during his period of repose. To be sure, there is some reason for thinking he seems to go more slowly with the wretched, because when our skies are clouded by sorrow there is no shadow cast on the dial for us to watch wearily as he creeps slowly on. But then, even in the high bright noon of our prosperity, there seems now and then to arise some Joshua of circumstance to bid the sun stand still and arrest the crawling shadow. With all deference to Rosalind, then, I fancy Time halts with the happy and the miserable alike, and sleeps over our joys and our griefs indifferently.

At this period of my story, Time, if he be not actually nodding, is at all events making such slow progress with my characters, one and all, glad or sad, that we must, if you please, take a leap, and resume the thread of the story later.

But we may as well take a glance in passing to see whether, in the different cases of the characters in this story, he is making sorrows drag heavily, or perpetuating joys while he takes his forty winks.

With a newly-married couple like the Honourable Henry and Mrs. Vorian, of course he is reposing in the gentle radiance of a honeymoon. Well, I'm not so sure about that. When Mr. Orr bartered away his daughter, he made it a special stipulation that her husband should retire from the army. He had no notion of his girl being dragged about from one station to

another, as soldiers' wives must submit to be at all times. So Henry Vorian sold his commission, and became an idler man than ever—a man without even a pretence of employment. He spent much of his time at home; and as neither he nor Honoria knew enough of each other to take any interest in each other's tastes or pursuits, they bored one another to death.

The Honourable Honoria Vorian, I must tell you, was a very different person from plain Miss Honoria Orr. She had sold herself for a title, and she meant to enjoy her purchase. Her father had secured her interests in the marriage settlements, and to a great extent her husband was her dependant. She made him feel this, and prolonged into her married life the element of commerce which had distinguished her courtship. Every sum of money that Henry drew from his wife's coffers was obtained for value received. When he wished to spend a few pounds, his wife insisted on realising a little of her dignity. She must go to the opera in state, or she must give an entertainment, or be taken to this or that noble house. She was a miser of the position she had purchased, and delighted to feast her pink eyes on it at every possible opportunity. How delighted she was whenever she had an opportunity of taking precedence of people to whom as Miss Orr she had had to defer. Henry Vorian, we know, had never cared very much for society; and so he and his wife parted company in this direction very early, and soon after marriage had come tacitly to the understanding that each was to take the way that seemed pleasant to each, and neither was to interfere with the other—a charming arrangement enough in a general way, but not such an arrangement as should be made between two people whom a holy decree has pronounced to be one.

Did Mr. and Mrs. Orr perceive this, and were they at all distressed at so fatal a portent for their child's future happiness? Not they. The miserable old man was still earning his gold by the sweat of his brow, and was proud of having invested his flesh and blood so well. He had been accustomed to speak of his daughter as "Narcy" in old times, but now never—even when time was of importance to him—did he speak of her otherwise than as "The Honourable Mrs. Vorian—the future Lady Lacquoigne, you know." As for Mrs. Orr, that phrase was so constantly recurring in her poor vulgar talk, that the echoes of the mansion in Grosvenor Place seemed to be perpetually repeating "The Honourable Mrs. Henry Vorian, Lady Lacquoigne as is to be." She did not think that there was any ill omen in the early coldness and indifference which sprang up between her child and Henry Vorian.

So Henry Vorian goes to races, and frequents his club, and

is seen at less reputable places than these at times. And the Honourable Mrs. Vorian goes to the opera, and moves in the best society, and does not, you may be sure, lack a few devoted cavaliers, who hover about her and run on her errands, despite the fact that late hours don't improve pink eyes, and evening dresses do not heighten the effect of bony charms. But what can such slight imperfections as these do to mar the worth of a golden image?

Mr. Orr continues to visit Babel Court in the City, where gold appears to shower in upon him as if he were a lovely Danaë, instead of a stout, coarse, repulsive, elderly gentleman. Has he discovered the philosopher's stone, and, does he spend his time in that dingy office in transmuting the duller metals into golden ingots? Or has he made a bargain with the gnomes or the fairies for the enjoyment of untold riches? I cannot say. But if the latter, I think we may look for a time when the elves' gift will be revoked, or the charm broken by his crossing running water, in which case all his wealth will be changed into withered leaves or pebbles.

Mrs. Orr continues to hoard the gold her husband makes. How surprised she would be to open her store some day, and find only a collection like the sweepings of a gravel walk, instead of the precious metal!

You must pardon these little fanciful digressions and childish allusions to fairy legends. As we have agreed to consider Chronos asleep for the nonce, there can be no waste of time in trifling a little just by way of change. And it does seem so funny to fancy the very matter-of-fact and commonplace Orrs affected by such fairy foolery!

Lord and Lady Lacquoigne profited by their son's marriage. The aristocratic nose was not long in hitting off the right scent. My lady discovered her daughter-in-law's weakness, and turned it to account. She was always saying that she and my lord had not long to live now, and she only regretted that they could not leave Beauchet in a fitter state of repair for the occupation of Henry and his wife.

"You, my dear Honoria, are wealthy, and the old honours and the old influence of the family will revive when you come to the title, and I wish we could make the place more worthy of its coming prosperity."

On this hint Honoria was not slow in acting. Without the least delicacy she began to look on Beauchet as her own, and was always planning alterations and improvements. Of course my lord was put forward to the world as doing all this, and of course his dutiful daughter-in-law supplied him with the funds to carry out the plans. Also, of course, the affec-

tionate father-in-law and the affectionate mother-in-law took a percentage, and made Honoria pay heavily, though unconsciously, for her prospective enjoyment of the estate.

Let us turn from this fascinating family group to our other people.

James Trefusis is a prosperous man and a disappointed man. He is prosperous because the French Government has purchased his invention, and paid him nobly for it. (I may mention here that some of the first iron lips that spoke freedom for the people of Italy, on the plains of Piedmont, were the mouths of guns made on the Trefusis model). He is a disappointed man because the woman for whose sake only he values his success and its tangible results has passed away from his ken like a spectre.

How he has watched and waited, how he has searched and schemed to find any trace of her would take too long to tell. But a silver thread here and there in his dark hair speaks plainly what he has suffered. He has learnt patience now. He has plucked endurance out of the heart of despair, and waits, scarcely hoping, yet not entirely desponding. His success with the French Government is acknowledged by all scientific and practical men to be nothing more than he deserves. The merit of his invention is recognised everywhere, save in that incomprehensible Ordnance Office, where Ledbitter, and Sanders, and Tattifer are still impervious. The result is, that James has ample employment thrust upon him in spite of his reluctance; and this is the saving of him, because, no matter how stale, flat, and unprofitable life may be to a man like this man, he cannot but take an interest in the fit work that falls to his lot, and to take an interest in work is to begin to take an interest in life.

And where is this woman who has so fatally mistrusted herself and him?

Still toiling at her most ungracious task. She has grown sick of a governess's position, and is now a teacher in a National School. The children, buzzing over their lessons, regard her with respect, for she is gentle and yet firm with them, and possesses the one virtue which inevitably conquers young people—patience. How should she fail to possess that? Men and women can train themselves to endure, just as Mithridates could fortify himself against poison. And how could Marian better learn that stern repressive power of patience than by keeping herself, as she does, a prisoner in a living tomb? One word she knows would bring that conscientious man to her side, to make her his wife, in despite of disfigurement and poverty, and the ravages which care, and want, and



death-in-life have made. But fondly as she loves him, she chokes back the cry for pity and comfort, and is dead to him and the world. Only when she reads, as she does read at times, of "the Mr. Trefusis whose gun has been so favourably spoken of by French artillery officers of distinction during the Italian campaign," her eyes fill with tears, and a sigh—such a sigh as seems to confirm the old belief that when it is heaved a drop of the heart's blood escapes,—breaks from her in almost a groan, and desolation stares her more cruelly in the face.

Is it not strange how we—women especially—seem fated to torture ourselves for a mistake? Marian is making two people unutterably wretched when they ought both to be blest beyond all power of words, for they love each other; and if two people love each other—I wish there were some sacred word to express the real passion, love is so dragged through the mud of valentines and twopenny sentiment—when two people love each other there is nothing in the further gift of Heaven or of man that can add to their happiness.

But if Marian's state is gloomy and wretched, there is at least for us who are lookers-on a hope that by-and-by the clouds will lift. Alas! over Alice's future they are gathering and thickening. The darkness deepens. Captain Cormack has served the devil too long and too well not to have his services recognised. His plans are laid with a fatal certainty. Poor Alice!

The darkness deepens. No hope of employment offers. She wearies herself out, and loses health and spirits in the weary search. The narrow field for female employment is narrowed in her case by the virtuous rectitude of Miss Delamere and the fatally officious friendship of Captain Cormack. If a chance seems to promise well for her, he creeps forward, exhibits a deep interest in her, and makes a mystery of the relation in which he stands to her; and then the door is closed against her.

The darkness deepens. Without any friends of her own sex, Alice feels very lonely and wretched. No wonder she does not sternly refuse the advances towards friendship made by the French actress. When once that agreeable foreigner has established herself within the outworks, Alice's reserve is compelled to lay down arms. Who could resist her winning ways? And there really does not seem to be anything wrong in her. Before very long she has so won on Alice that the poor girl has told her all her troubles and anxieties. The French woman shrugs her shoulders, "*C'est affligeant! C'est pénible!*" but a woman should not be afraid to escape from

these troubles. A man may combat difficulties—but a woman! She is born to be petted and made much of, not to struggle with necessity!"

The darkness deepens indeed, for Alice does not see whither this gay, fatal French philosophy tends. She does not shrink away startled when Valérie speaks of Captain Cormack as her admirer, her lover. Of course I do not mean that she for one instant realises all that this means to the French woman, or that she knows what she is applauding when she is so charmed at Valérie's singing, "*Dans un grérier qu'on est bien à vingt ans!*" But the poison is at work.

Darker yet! Alice's stock of money is exhausted, and though she still strives frantically, despairingly, to cling to hope, to clutch at employment, it is slipping away from her.

The little needlework she can obtain is a mere nothing to support her, and she is neither a rapid nor a neat workwoman. Then comes the time when she cannot pay her rent, when she dreads the sight of her landlady. After this comes the time when she no longer dreads to see her, for she is past all fear and hope. The landlady becomes importunate—rude—cruel. Finally she turns Alice out of doors, and detains her poor boxes in payment of rent.

The darkness is deeper still. For Captain Cormack knows all this—it is done at his instigation. To whom can this friendless, shelterless, penniless girl fly for aid or advice but to him?

She comes to him. And who but he is her best and only friend? He comforts her and assists her. He threatens to punish those who have dealt harshly with her. He draws tighter and tighter the fatal meshes of his net.

Starvation—rags—the workhouse—these are staring her in the face. She is not being tempted, she is being driven to her fate.

And now the darkness grows deep indeed—so deep that I dare not attempt to pierce it.

Sleep in your quiet grave, George Carlyon; slumber deep on your hard pallet, Marian, and may Heaven in its mercy spare you a dream of the evil days that have fallen upon your darling Alice!

The darkness has deepened indeed! It is the utter darkness, one almost believes, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## THE KEY OF THE MAJOR.

THE Honourable Mr. and Mrs. Vorian have voted Mayfair slow, and don't care particularly for Belgravia. They have selected a house in Kensington, where they will be near the Gardens—Kensington Gardens, and those other horticultural grounds which are being planned. Of course when I say "they," I mean Mrs. V. The Honourable Henry in these matters entirely defers to his wife.

One result of this move—perhaps an intentional result—is that their families do not trouble them much with their presence. The aristocratic nose is seldom followed in a westerly direction by its noble owner, nor does Mrs. Orr's pug turn up much in that neighbourhood. The young people have society of their own, so the old people say, and the connection is kept up by letter chiefly. And the letters flow in in this wise. Lady L. writes to dear Honoria, to tell her that so-and-so might be done with great effect at Beauchet; and then Honoria writes to dear papa, with all sorts of love to dear mamma, and a request for "just a wee more money to invest in the estates." Then dear papa writes back, enclosing a cheque; and then dear Honoria hands it on to dear Lady L.; and so the dear transaction comes to an end.

I must admit that this correspondence occurs frequently. Whenever the Lacquoignes are a little pressed—and when are they not?—her ladyship never fails to bethink her of some marvellous improvement of which the property is susceptible. One can scarcely be surprised that in time dear papa begins to get a little tired of the process of drawing cheques, and writes to Honoria that it is out of his power to oblige her just now, as he has had some severe losses by the collapse of the Great American House, Bowhay, Scalpham, and Blaise.

This is very annoying to Honoria. It does not so much matter that she can't get the money immediately for the Beauchet repairs; but the fact is that she had added a little margin for another purpose more immediate. Beauchet can wait, but Major Cantlow can't.

"And who is Major Cantlow?" I hear some of my readers inquire. Major Cantlow has sprung up in the interval which I spoke of in the last chapter. A more charming man in society you never met, and he is such a crack shot with the rifle; and

as for billiards, why Roberts can't give him more than ten, for there never was such a steady hand at a hazard. The major is so popular with the ladies especially, that, as a natural consequence, the men hate him, and say ugly things about him. "Oh, that fellow Cantlow! Why the doose did he leave the Indian army, eh?" they ask—not of the major directly though, for it is supposed he is quite capable of winging a man at fifty paces. But the story goes that Major C. was recommended to resign in consequence of some queer complications about the treasury chest discovered after he had been acting paymaster for a few months. The major attached himself to the Vorians, or rather to Mrs. V., soon after their marriage. He had never taken much notice of Miss Honoria Orr, but he was devotedly attentive to the Honourable Mrs. Vorian.

"Oh, no! doose a bit," said the major to himself as he sipped his liquor—he was waiting to take Mrs. V. to the opera—"dooose a bit, Canty, my boy. The old card was not such a flat as to let you marry his daughter—catch him at it; time thrown away to try it on. But I rather guess, my friend, that when two people marry and don't care a dump for each other, you may cut in and turn the wife into a very remunerative property—eh, old chap?" And the major winked, an operation which it required some ingenuity on his part to make unmistakably evident. For the major's eyes were small and gray and deep-set, and they were rather near together and close up under his eyebrows, so that their normal appearance had much of the character of a wink. For the rest he was rather handsome, with an aquiline nose coming down over a long drooping moustache, very little tinged with gray; a smiling mouth, but not a kindly one; and a complexion whose only fault was a tendency to exchange its usual pallor for an inflammatory flush, probably produced by hanging over the billiard table.

His attention was very acceptable to Honoria. She had never been accustomed to be studied as he studied her, and, in comparison with her husband's neglect, his respectful devotion "stuck fiery out indeed." You must remember that, though she did not love her husband, she was pained and disappointed by his neglect of her. It was a natural womanly feeling on her part. And then, again, she had never been admired by anyone in all her life; and the major was always paying her delicate compliments about her looks, so cleverly and artfully worded that there seemed no extravagance in them.

The major was just at that convenient age when a man calls himself old or young just as it suits his purpose. Thus he declared that there was no impropriety in an old fellow like

him taking care of Mrs. Vorian and beaueing her about, but yet assumed the gaiety and ease of a young man in his gallantry towards her. He talked about feeling like a father towards her to other people, but he spoke to her of having a brotherly regard for her. And this brotherly regard went so far that he was even induced to tell her all his troubles. Poor fellow! an iniquitous brother, who forged to a ruinous extent, and fled from the result of his crime, had imposed on him the task of shielding the family name from dishonour, and compelled him to accept that guilty brother's liabilities. Strictly speaking the major had never had a brother.

Honoria had felt great difficulty in offering to aid this noble victim of fraternal ingratitude. At first she used to send him bank-notes anonymously, but this system the major found to be liable to objection.

"Confound it, one has to wait a post or two, and, after all, they might be lost; and one's so doosid pressed so often unexpectedly that it's important to handle the coin with promptitude," mused the major over his frugal breakfast—a cup of coffee and an egg. So, as soon as he had finished his meal, he set his face westward, and paid a call on Mrs. Vorian.

As soon as the groom of the chambers had closed the door the major who, after the usual greetings, had paused on the hearthrug, with an elbow on the mantelpiece, stepped towards his hostess again, and took her by the hand once more.

"Generous creature! it is impossible for me not to guess who so nobly assists a poor struggling but honest old soldier."

Honoria stammered out something about not understanding his meaning.

"No! I cannot allow you, my kindest of benefactresses, to feign ignorance, and deprive me of the pleasure of expressing my gratitude for such noble conduct—which I appreciate too highly and too deeply value its sincerity and delicacy to pain you by attempting to refuse—by mistaking the—pardon me, my dear Mrs. Vorian, words are too weak to express my feelings."

Mrs. Vorian pressed the major's hand warmly, and with some confusion begged him think of the matter no more. She was only too charmed to be able to turn her pocket-money, which was lying idle, to such good purpose.

The major once more overwhelmed her with protestations of gratitude, and contrived to arrange matters so cleverly and conveniently that from that hour he had no more difficulty about getting a pecuniary lift direct from his benefactress, without the aid and uncertainty of the post.

These two people have a secret now; and a secret between a

man and his friend's wife is an ugly bit of machinery that the devil can turn and twist to his purpose without much difficulty. If I had been Henry Vorian, I should not have liked to see what intimate friends my wife and the major were. But Henry Vorian did not care.

"What's the odds?" he said to some officious, well-intentioned friend; "what's the odds? Cantlow is a deuced sight too wise to fall in love with Mrs. V., and she's old enough to take care of herself. Cantlow likes a good dinner and a good glass of wine; and if he lets himself out, like the greengrocer round the corner, to attend on my wife at the opera and elsewhere for his victuals, I've no objection. He saves me a good deal of bother, for if she hadn't got someone else to trot her out, I should have to do it; and, hang it, a fellow's club and weed and hand at whist is worth all the operas that were ever howled. Law bless you, I'm quite happy. He has too good taste. Hang it, a chap who's got Fanny Selwood, of the T. R. Blank, dying for him, isn't such a flat as to fall in love with my wife. As for her, I've the fullest confidence in her good sense."

With that the Honourable Henry sorts his cards, and goes on with his game quietly. He was a good hand at whist, but at other games the major was more than his match, rely upon it.

Between Henry Vorian and his wife there is no longer even the pretence of regard or affection kept up. They have one child, but what should have drawn them together, failed to do so. Honoria was far too fashionable a person to be a mother to her own child. The future Lord Lacquoigne was indebted for all maternal offices to Mary Jones, who left her own poor babe in the country to be brought up by hand to man's estate—and deformity.

The Honourable Henry Vorian had been so fond of his little brothers and sisters, that he quite expected to be fond of his own child. But his son and heir, thanks to the unnatural circumstances of his rearing, was a cross and fretful child, and made discontented faces so very like his mother's, that Henry Vorian sent him back to the nursery, and never asked for him again.

As a rule, the only meal the Vorian family take together is breakfast. It is certainly the only meal they take together alone. At that cheerful repast Henry reads the paper incessantly; while Honoria, after skimming the births, deaths, and marriages, takes up her novel.

"When shall you return?" she asks, scarcely looking up from her book, as Henry rises from table.

"Well, I really cannot say. But as it will not interfere with any arrangements of yours, it is of no consequence."

"Oh, pray do not suppose I wish to know anything about your movements."

"Of course not; they are quite indifferent to you."

"Fortunately, they are, for I learn so little of them that they would be a perpetual source of anxiety."

"It's lucky you have sense enough to see the advantage."

"You have every right to be surprised to discover I possess any sense. I married you!"

"Or I you? But we won't quarrel about terms."

"Oh, dear no; we so seldom quarrel, it would be a pity."

And Mrs. Vorian was unintentionally right in saying this. They did *not* quarrel. A quarrel presupposes amicable relations, and implies the possibility of reconciliation; and between the Vorian the first had never existed, and the second was out of the question therefore. They began by utter indifference, which gave place, as they began to pull different ways in the couples, to weariness and dislike. They spoke bitterly to each other, not because they wanted to have a storm to clear the matrimonial atmosphere, but because they disliked each other intensely in a passive sort of way. It was not strong enough for hate, but it was some way removed from indifference.

But there was a listless, purposeless character about the bitter *badinage* of this couple that was ill-omened. A good tiff, or even a continued spiteful cross-fire, between two married people, though not exactly necessary, is by no manner of means indicative of want of affection. In fact, love in a cottage may come to be so like a dream of happiness that Corydon and Phyllis have to pinch or slap one another in order to become assured they are awake.

When Henry Vorian and his wife have finished their fusillade, without much damage done on either side, the former strolls off to his club, or to Lord's, or to some other haunt of idle swells. His wife writes her letters, and then puts on a fascinating morning gown, and reclines in state in her boudoir.

And she has not been there long before a familiar knock at the door tells her that the major has arrived. How full of animation and information he is, yet how tenderly attentive to her slightest word, or look or wish. She sits a little queen on her low couch, making pretence to work some frivolous fancy thing or other, and he hovers about ready to hand anything she needs, to wind her silks or to advise on the colours.

He can tell her everything that is going on. She need never puzzle her head to think what to do to kill time. The major kills

him for her the day before, cooks him, and serves him up with a tempting *carte*. First of all, there's a flower show, or a fancy bazaar, and then there's a picture gallery or a concert, and then there's the park; and by-and-by "Lucia" at the Opera House, or some capital piece at one of the theatres. There never was such a *chef* as the major, and there never were *menus* like his—he served up time in so many different distracting forms, and with such infinite variety.

They were most fascinating and charming, these morning chats, to Honoria. To the major, if you insist on my being candid, I'm inclined to think they were a bore. But then the major knew that every poor man must work for his living, and, after all, this kind of work was not very hard, and the profits were very fair. At any rate he never let Honoria suspect he was bored for one single instant. He used to mask yawns in smiles. He was a consummate actor. No amateur performance was held to be perfect without him; and he really was almost as good as a professional actor, which is not what amateurs generally are, despite the fulsome exaggerations of which some dramatic critics are tempted to be guilty—tempted by the miserable inducement of an admission into the society of swells, and an unlimited supply of champagne and cold chicken. But if Towdeater, of the *Court Chronicle*, had any spark of literary conscience left, it must have been some consolation to him, after belauding Miss Bowwouse and Captain Yelper for their miserable performance, to feel that there was no need to lie about Major Cantlow, who really could perform in one of Charles Mathews's pieces without making you miserable.

Oh, yes, Major Cantlow is a consummate actor!

He sits with Honoria all the morning, fascinating her with the flow of his brilliant conversation. Now he is sportive, and even humorous; but he knows the feminine nature too well to risk failure by expecting too great an appreciation of the comic. Now he is earnest—dropping his voice and drawing his chair nearer to Honoria as he tells her the latest news of that irrepressible brother. Now he is sympathetic—delicately referring to people who are not appreciated as they ought to be in quarters where such appreciation would be trebly valuable; and then, gliding into the mysterious and suggestive, he wanders off to speculations about predestined attachments and the mysterious affinity of souls. And then, having set Honoria sighing, he sighs too, for company, if only for the opportunity of passing off a very good yawn as a half-suppressed sigh.

But presently he rises to go, and takes a tender but most



respectful leave. And when he has got out of sight of the house, he gives himself a stretch and a shake.

"Curse me if I think I'm getting half enough interest for my outlay. Making love to an ugly and uninteresting woman ought to fetch more than I'm getting. I'm almost asleep. A weed and a game of pyramids may perhaps restore me. I'll try 'em."

You see we have found the key of the major. He is a needy adventurer, so gifted by Nature with the arts and advantages necessary for his calling, that she is almost deserving of being coupled with him in the indictment.

The major is a clever man undoubtedly; but the game he is playing is a dangerous one. Under certain conditions a slight touch with the hand—a mere passing pressure of the foot—will set an avalanche loose to swoop down into the valley; but you who set it moving cannot stop it when once it is off—and then woe betide you!

The key of the major. Yes, you can open it with that if you please, and dash off a composition in fine style; but by the inevitable laws of harmony there are certain things which must follow. Whether you like it or no, you'll have to resolve some of your combinations, and then the finish of your concerted piece is to a great extent beyond your control.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE PROSPECTS OF THE BAL.

THE old moors above Polvrehan are sorely changed now. The grandeur and desolation have vanished. Where the curlew used to pipe as he flitted, a flock of brown, over the purple heather, there is the noise of hammers and the shriek of pulleys. Tall straddling timbers, like the wooden legs of departed giants, stand beside gloomy, yawning shafts, and chain cables keep up a constant rattle as they mount and plunge with their clattering iron cauldrons, or kebbles, as the miners call them. A long, unsightly mound, like a bit of railway embankment, shows how actively Wheal Cormack has been worked.

Every here and there about the moor you come upon a rapid turbid little watercourse. The water is warm, for it is pumped up from the hot centre of earth, from the lower levels, where the men work almost stripped; and that devious runnel, after coursing about some time, makes its way to a large water-wheel that stands solitary and untended some distance from the mine. That wheel is worked by the infantine Rella, and in its turn works the pumps that drain the mine. At this point the runnel empties its polluted stream into Rella: and from the first day that Rella was darkened by that water, her once limpid wave has been clouded, and the flashing trout are gone—even the vegetation along the banks is poisoned by the mineral water.

The moor is dotted with little cottages now, and there is a chapel called Elin, and a public-house called "New-found-out," which is, I surmise, the Cornish for "Newly-found Inn;" and there are a few shops, and a butcher visits it twice a week; for Wheal Cormack is a fine speculation, and employs a good many hands, and the moor has become the temporary camping ground of a large mining population. I say temporary camping ground advisedly, for the mining population is a shifting and nomadic race. Here and there you come upon deserted mines, with dismantled engine-houses, that have such a vacant staring look about them that you can almost fancy they are conscious of their ruin: and round these desolate mementoes of unfortunate speculation and mad folly there will be found the remains of the once populous village—decaying cottages, with overrun gardens and rotting roofs.

This blight may fall on Wheal Cormack by-and-by ; but at present all is prosperity. The miners—a strange race of men, utterly distinct from their compatriots the farm labourers—have established themselves there in force, and alternately labour and enjoy themselves according to their peculiar manners and customs. They go to Elim to hear the rantings of some very worthy and very ignorant tub-thumper, or, wearying of him, get up a revival, and raise hysterics and epilepsy to the temporary position of religious exercises. At other times they betake themselves to “New-found-out,” where they bemuse themselves with bad cider or worse spirits, until it occurs to them to blow out the lights and have a free fight in the dark, when they slap and scratch one another in a lively but not very effectual manner. Sometimes, it is true, a knife may be drawn, but, then, a fist is never by any chance clenched ; and I would here submit to those who have a greater horror perhaps of prize-fights than I have, never having seen one, that it is a curious fact, and one which none of us can quite dismiss as he would like, that in this part of England, where boxing is comparatively unknown, stabbing is far more common than it should be. I don’t attempt to argue or deduce, but I can’t help stating the fact.

The other amusements of the inhabitants of this pleasant village may be summed up briefly. They poached a little, and occasionally robbed a hen-roost, and they kept pigs on almost Hibernian terms of familiarity with the family ; and they bred ugly dogs and fought them, as they occasionally did cocks.

But yet they were intelligent—most intelligent as a rule—and could many of them sketch you a rough diagram of any of the mining machinery with a board and a lump of chalk ; and they were industrious, working very hard in their hours of labour, though the system of working in corps gave them a good deal of time between each period of work.

The female inhabitants of the village were almost as peculiar a class as the men. They wore a dress that was as characteristic as a foreign costume. Sun-bonnets, perked up like Norman caps, petticoats reaching only half way down the calf, and thick lace up boots. Their figures were robust but shapely—their shoulders broad and well set, and their legs would have made a London footman burst with envy. Their hands and feet, I confess were large, and their faces, as a rule, plain, if not coarse. As a body, the Bal-maidens were, if rough and even masculine in bearing, well conducted and virtuously minded.

As wives and mothers they did not shine, it must be allowed ;

but girls who were sent to mine as soon as they were big enough to earn wages for carrying ore, or breaking it up so as to facilitate the extraction of the metal, could hardly be expected to know very much about household affairs.

Such was the appearance of the moors behind Polvrehan, and such were the inhabitants who succeeded the rabbits and curlews, when Wheal Cornack was put to work, and the lode was cut in "the forty," as the highest level was called.

"Well, cap'n, what news?" asked Cormack, as he rode up to the door of the agent's house on his pony.

"Oh, bra'ave, Cap'n Cormack, bra'ave, I reck'n," said Captain Tregenna, coming to the door; "it's cuttin' bewtiful in all the levels. We could raise a'most any quantity a day, on'y 'twouldn't be wise."

"Aye, just so, cap'n. And how's the new shaft going on?"

"Well, we'm getting on so va'st as we can, I reck'n; but the country's hard just there."

"Then we needn't put up the engine yet."

"We sha'ant want she just yet, I'm thinkin'; but I s'pose, cap'n, we'll have a dinner when we set her to work."

"Aye, that we will!"

"I'm glad o' that, cap'n, for you see, 'tesn't as if the Bal was sta'rted proper-like, if we don't have now't o' the sort. Besides, 'twill be the means of bringing some of 'em to you for a sett, may be, cap'n. You mind, there's other lodes about here, for sartin. I've a-seen the lights a-fleckerin' all about the ground here; ye don't see that, I reck'n, where's no lode."

"I dare say it would set some of 'em longing to try their luck, cap'n, and I shouldn't be sorry to see every acre of the moor paying me a royalty."

"Well, so soon as it is time to begin buildin' the engine-house and stack, I'll let you know, cap'n. You don't want to go underground to-day, I reck'n."

"No, cap'n, not to-day. Are you going?"

"Aw, I'd on'y just come to grass—on'y had time to shift myself afore you comed. Won't 'ee step in and have something to make use o'? I've a potato pasty here, and I can give 'ee a crem o' liquor, cap'n."

"Not now, thanke'e, cap'n; I lunched just before I came out."

Henry Cormack turned his horse and cantered off homeward. He was very elate. Everything he touched now seemed to prosper, and you can hardly be astonished if his success hardened him a little. He thought he couldn't be so very wicked, after all, when he was so successful in all his undertakings.

The only drawback to his entire success was the foundry.

He had injured it partly by his neglect, and partly by his false economy. In order to have other irons in the fire, he had robbed this business of much of its sinew. The old *prestige* of the engines was being lost, and a new joint stock company further west was carrying off the custom.

"It's no use keeping an egg in hopes of hatching until it's too late to sell it as new-laid," said Henry Cormack to himself; "I'll make the new engine for the Bal, and then I'll sell the foundry."

With these words he turned in at the gate of Polvrehan.

Captain Tregenna, stimulated to fresh exertions by the thought of the great banquet to be given on the occasion of the putting to work of the engine at the new shaft, hurried on his men with a will, and before very long notified to Captain Cormack that it would be as well to begin building the engine house and stack presently. So Henry Cormack gave the necessary orders, and had the preparations made at the foundry for casting the engine.

But he was a niggard in soul this man, and could not resist a bit of petty dishonesty. He saw his way to turning a fraudulent penny by the transaction. He found a man willing to build the engine-house and stack at an absurdly low price. This, of course, meant that he would not build it properly but what did that matter to Henry Cormack? He could charge the other adventurers a much heavier sum than the job had cost, and pocket the difference. He was really a delightful partner! For he not only did this shrewd stroke of business in the building line, but he meant to clear something very handsome on the engine. He could make something that would answer his purpose very well at much less cost than the sum the company had agreed to pay him for it.

The truth is that all he did now was for a specific purpose. He had realised large sums of money, and he began to think of retiring from active business. The foundry he had already made up his mind to sell. He would raise the apparent value of his Polvrehan property as much as possible by starting as many mines on it as he could find adventurers to undertake, and then he would sell the estate, and go and live somewhere nearer London.

This man had an uneasy conscience, one would almost fancy from this. We know he ought to have had one, and that Polvrehan, at all events, should have been too full of reminiscences of the Carlyons to be a pleasant residence for one who has been their evil genius. His had been a restless, feverish chase of riches. In his pursuit of them he had done many things he did not particularly care to remember, not because

he had any remorse, but because he had a superstitious fear of possible consequences. But now he was becoming wealthy. There was no necessity to live any longer in that house. He could afford to sell his undertakings. He would go somewhere where he was not known, and start as a country gentleman.

How he looked forward to that time! What visions he formed of perfect peace and freedom from care! Why should he not? If the honest and industrious man finds a deep delight in dreams of retirement from his honourable labour, why should not the poor rogue rejoice at the thought of escape from anxious toils, that are haunted by a demon echo whispering, "You will be detected, and fail." Mr. Peabody, good benevolent man, was pleased no doubt, to relinquish the cares of business; but what would not Bill Sykes, or Fagan, or even the Artful Dodger give to be able to throw up his trade, and retire into private life?

In course of time, the foundry is advertised for sale. A few days after the first announcement, Captain Carlyon receives a letter from Mr. Totting, a lawyer in London, who informs him that a client of his is inclined to purchase the foundry, and inquires the price of it. The captain sends him the requisite information as to terms, and then Mr. Totting writes again; and so, after a brief correspondence, it is agreed that Mr. Totting's client is to have the foundry. Captain Cormack, however, cannot deliver up possession until a certain date, as he is engaged in finishing off several commissions, and more particularly is anxious to superintend the construction of an engine for Wheal Cormack, which is situated on his property. No objection is made to this arrangement on the part of Mr. Totting's client, and the transfer is settled. And then Henry Cormack learns that the purchaser is Mr. James Trefusis, the inventor of the gun so highly spoken of by the French papers and scientific men. He also learns that Mr. Trefusis was a *protégé* of his late partner, Mr. George Carlyon, which latter discovery makes him unaccountably uneasy. He seems to have an instinctive dread of James, and he makes up his mind to keep out of his way.

What has induced James Trefusis to buy the foundry? It is not easy to say. It was an impulse at first, perhaps, for directly he saw it advertised for sale in the papers, he was seized with a desire to purchase it. But the impulse was strengthened by reflection. He had nothing to live for now, he felt. The great object of his life was accomplished, but its purpose was defeated. He had made himself rich, but the woman who was to have shared them was gone—was virtually

dead. So he determined to quit the busy world of London, and go back to the quiet little village where the earliest and happiest years of his life had passed. There he could people the dear old scenes with recollections of the past, and dream away his life. It was the instinct of the wounded wild creature which returns to die on the spot whence it started.

Meanwhile, the workmen are busy at Wheal Cormack. The tall chimney-stack is rising rapidly—too rapidly, perhaps, to be soundly built. Captain Tregenna does not complain, however, for he is looking forward anxiously to the great dinner when he will be made such a lion of, and when the mine will be inaugurated in a strictly proper manner.

We must make a point of not missing that banquet. We will see the feast, and we will also be present at that interesting ceremony, the first setting-to-work of the engine.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### A DAY IN EPPING FOREST

It is a lovely day, just at the beginning of autumn—the very beginning, before you become conscious that the gold and russet which the woods are putting on are the harbingers of decay—before the evenings have grown too short, and while as yet the flowers have not made way for the fruits entirely, though the orchards are bright with red and gold-streaked apples, and the yellow corn is rustling in the breeze that skims the opening fields. And then the hazels are thick with nuts, which is excellent news for the school children, who are going to spend their annual holiday in Epping Forest.

Marian is up with the lark this morning—really up with the lark, for, as she puts on her bonnet and shawl, the lark in the cage outside the chair-mender's window next door takes his head from under his wing, and seeing that the sun has already wakened a twinkle in the twilight sky, begins to sing of the delights of dewy fields, and knock his head against the roof of his prison in the vain desire to soar.

Marian lifts the blind and peeps out. There is no threatening of rain. She is very glad to see that. One would almost fancy that she is looking forward to the day's pleasure on her own account; but she is not. "Teacher"—as the little people over

whom she presides are wont to call her—is a quiet and cheerful person, who does her duty and loves to see her small charges happy and well behaved. She finds her chief comfort and consolation in their society, and enters into all their hopes and wishes. It is on their account, not her own, that Marian Carlyon casts an anxious look at the sky as she rises.

As she looks at the heavens, and strives to read the signs of the weather, does she discern nothing that should mark the day for her as an important one?

She only sees the gold spreading abroad, mingling with the gray, and holding forth promises of serenity and sunlight. Nothing more than this!

How early all the little ones are stirring! Short, fat, thumby fingers are knuckling sleep out of numerous eyelids or ere the chair-mender's lark has uttered his first chirrup. There is much polishing of morning faces and a vigorous brushing of hair and scrubbing of small paws. Breakfast may be quoted as having a downward tendency, for it is being swallowed in haste even by those stolid, solid young people, whom the immediate prospect of the day's pleasuring cannot always prevail upon to forego their natural sustenance.

Best clothes are fished out of drawers where they have lain so long that a twelve hours' holiday does not quite obliterate the creases they have acquired during their retirement. Juvenile boots are for once polished to a dazzling lustre, and there is a marvellous display of clean linen in the form of shirt fronts, collars, and cuffs.

At an early hour in the morning, Mr. Sprowt, the greengrocer in Gray's Inn Road, is busily engaged in decorating the van which stands in his yard with evergreens and little flags. He christens that van "Industry"—a rather curious name for a pleasure van—and he lets it out on very reasonable terms to excursionists. I dare say Dobbin and Gaylad, the two horses in the stable adjoining the yard, hearing the whishing of evergreens and the breaking of branches, interpret these signs with great ease, and look at one another mournfully, as much as to say, "Oh, bother! here's another score of people to lug to Epping Forest and back!"

Early in the morning, too, rises the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth, curate of St. Pacifica's, Clerkenwell. He shaves himself with great nicety, and puts on a clean white neckcloth. He is a young man, and he is not averse to the idea of being the cynosure of the little knot of young ladies who are going to Epping Forest with the school-children. He is a very amiable person, with a very small stipend, so we cannot begrudge him this simple and inexpensive pleasure.



"Hooray! hooray!"

The young people are gathering outside the school-house, and their delight is so great that they must shout.

After they have been kicking their heels about outside the school for some time, peeping furtively in at the window to observe Teacher packing loaves, and buns, and oranges into a large hamper, the children see the van coming up the street.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The excitement caused by the arrival of the vehicle has hardly subsided ere the Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth heaves in sight.

"Hooray! hooray!"

Mr. Chawksly, the milkman, arrives with a large tin of milk, which is placed inside the van, being intended for tea.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The young ladies who are to look after the children, and who, in one or two instances, are attended by the blushing, but beautifully dressed youths, who are, it appears, to look after them, arrive by degrees.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The vicar, who is old and gouty, hobbles down the street. He only comes to find fault with the arrangements, and he is very unpopular in the school. But on an occasion like this the desire to shout completely destroys any feeling of animosity, and the vicar is received with applause.

"Hooray! hooray!"

Even the policeman who saunters up by-and-by derives a temporary popularity from the general desire to make a noise as a means of relief for pent-up good spirits. It was only yesterday he impounded Jack O'Reilly's top, and barely a week since he confiscated Charley Snagg's hoop. He kicked Bill Marks two days ago, and punched Sam Wills on Wednesday. But to-day his misdeeds are condoned, and he receives an ovation.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The school-room door opens. It is Teacher!

"Hooray! hooray!"

No, it isn't Teacher; it is only the hamper with the bread and buns. Never mind, that deserves a cheer all the same.

"Hooray! hooray!"

Another hamper.

"Hooray! hooray!"

More hampers.

More "hoorays!"

The neighbourhood is becoming aware of the excitement. The barber comes to his door, and two gentlemen, who have done their intoxication early, in order to get the responsibility off their shoulders at once, stagger out of the "Cat and Compasses," at the corner opposite the school. One of them leans with a vacant smile against the post at the edge of the pavement. The other, in attempting to do the same against an imaginary post near his friend's, suddenly finds his level, and is promptly picked up by the policeman.

"Hooray! hooray!"

I won't undertake to say whether this cheer is to be understood as encouraging the civil force in the repression of intoxication, or as applauding a clever bit of comic business, or merely as an outburst of animal spirits. In reality I don't think the children themselves could give a reason for the shout.

"Hooray!"

They are being told off to their places inside and outside the van.

"Hooray! hooray!"

They swarm into their seats with agility, and presently a man in top-boots, with a portentously red nose, who has arrived to take the reins out of the hands of the lad who brought the van round, climbs to his perch in front, and inspects the scene gravely from his elevation.

"Hooray! hooray!"

They're off at last.

"Hooray! hooray! hooray! hooray!"

So they are borne along with much shouting and continuous waving of handkerchiefs. The clerk's son, who is a musician, and sings in the quire at St. Pacifica's, is seated on the box, regaling himself with airs upon the cornet, an instrument of which his knowledge is apparently limited, and which seems to have a tendency to burst out in the wrong place.

They arrive at the Forest without any further mishap than the knocking of some urchin's cap out of the van, or the bursting of an odd bottle or so of ginger beer among the cakes, which, however, only adds to the flavour, and prevents them from appearing too dry.

How these poor London-bred children enjoy this brief gasp of nature I have neither the time nor the power to describe to you. They climb trees for birds'-nests that have been empty since spring, and are disappointed at not finding eggs in them. They become acquainted for the first time in their lives perhaps with the urticating properties of the nettle, and the spinosity of the common furze bush. They tumble about, with an occa-

sional bruise or rent, and enjoy themselves heartily. They eat their meal of cake and milk and water with infinite relish, and return to their sports and pastimes with renewed vigour.

So the long, delightful day goes, and as the shadows begin to grow long, and when the hampers have run low, the children have wearied a little. Some of the smaller folk are sound asleep already, nestled around Teacher, who has tired herself out in her efforts to promote the happiness of her pupils.

Finally, there is a good deal of whipping-in required, and the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth has to make casts to bring in stragglers; and all hands are employed in reloading the van.

And now the question arises—where is the driver?

That fatal nose of his, I should have told you, turned up in disgust at the discovery that the school-feast caterers had provided no more potent stimulant than ginger beer. After expressing his disgust at “them there teetotalling humbugging ways,” the charioteer had departed, as he said, for a pint of mild ale with a dash of spirits, promising to return before the hour fixed for leaving. From that moment until long after the time when they should have taken their homeward way he was not again visible.

A search was instituted, but to no purpose. Here was a pretty difficulty! The young ladies had not sufficient confidence in one another’s driving, though each declared she was accustomed to handle the ribbons. They applied in a body to the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth to mount the box, but he was compelled to own that he was totally unacquainted with the art of driving.

There seemed nothing for it but to camp out in the Forest; when, at the last moment, the red-nosed one came beating up the avenue like an unseaworthy boat tacking into port. His unsteadiness was a cause of much consternation and anxiety; but at last the necessity of having an intoxicated driver or none came to be recognised as insurmountable, and the ladies accordingly agreed to place themselves in the hands of the red-nosed one.

Not without some difficulty and a good deal of very forcible language, that gentleman contrived to harness Dobbin and Gaylad to the van, and, after a little ado, managed to mount his perch.

For some time he went on so steadily that by degrees the alarm subsided, and the whole party, having had rather a tiring day, fell to nodding to one another all round, as if it were a general leave-taking.

But, alas! as ill luck would have it, in the Mile End Road

the red-nosed driver fell in with an old acquaintance who was driving a return hearse from the funeral of an Irish gentleman, who had been buried in one of the cemeteries on the Flats. As the driver of the hearse, as well as the red-nosed vannan, had been indulging in strong waters, he was by no means disinclined to enter with spirit into a race with the latter worthy.

Now a trial of speed between a hearse and a pleasure-van is so unusual and curious a spectacle, that we can hardly feel any great surprise that the driver of the Romford 'bus, in his amusement at the scene, should neglect to pull in, so as to let the van go by.

There was a crash, a grinding sound, a scream and a volley of violent language from the red-nosed one; and then the Industry settled down at one corner rather suddenly, burying the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth under a heavy layer of sleeping children and terrified young ladies.

The collision, which had carried off the front wheel, also knocked the driver from his box. As far as he was concerned, however, the injuries were slight, being in fact confined to the bursting of a white hat and a cut across the left knee of a pair of kersymeres. The damage to the van was irremediable.

There was nothing for it but to put the children into several cabs, and send them home; which the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth did, despatching a young lady in charge of each vehicle.

Finding that there were enough to see the little people home, Marian was about to set off for her own residence, after bidding the curate good-evening. She pushed her way through the crowd, which had of course gathered in an incredibly short space of time, to stare stolidly at the result of the accident, without offering any suggestions or apparently taking anything beyond the most superficial interest in it.

As she reached the outskirts of the mob, a hand was laid on her arm. She looked up in surprise.

"Now we have met again, Marian, we don't part easily."

It was James Trefusis!

Ah, what a throb of joy passed through that poor woman's heart as she felt herself once more safe and near him! And what a load seemed removed from his soul!

But they neither of them made any demonstration. There were two many eyes watching.

He drew her arm into his, and led her away.

"I shall see you to your door," he said, firmly.

"Oh, James, I don't deserve the happiness of seeing you again."

"How could you write that letter to me? Did you know me no better than that after all these years?"

"Oh, but I am so altered——"

"Not to me, darling. And if you had been ever so much changed, do you think it would have mattered to me, who prize you for your worth?"

"Oh, don't say so, James—I don't deserve it; and that was why I doubted."

"You were hardly recovered from the illness, I think. But you won't fancy that again, will you?"

She looks in his face, and says "No!" confidently; and then it being a retired lane that they have reached by this time, and gaslamps being few and dim, he bends down, draws her to his heart, and kisses her.

"Oh, James, James, I never dared to hope I should know this happiness again!"

"And I had almost despaired. But I have you now, and you will never run away from me again, will you?"

"Never, James."

And then James tells her of his good fortune, and how he is shortly to be master of the old foundry, and is trying, if possible, to purchase the old house at Polvrehan.

They walk all the way to Marian's humble lodgings in Clerkenwell, but the walk seems far too short for all they have to say.

"Good-night, my own darling—my wife!"

"Not yet, James, dear."

"No, but you will be so very soon, that I may call you so."

And so they separate after one long quiet embrace.

That night there was exquisite peace in those two hearts, and infinite gratitude and trust. The sad past was dead and buried, and the future was to be, oh, so bright!

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## LOWER YET !

POOR Alice's life is becoming very lonely now, and bitter remorse and the anguish of disappointed trust are playing sad havoc with her once lovely face. The grace of her figure is gone, for she droops like a flower that has been beaten to earth by the storm. And the springiness of her step is lost, and the music has died out of her voice as the glory seems faded from her golden hair.

She sees but little of Captain Cormack now. What were all his vows and protestations and oaths worth ? Now he did not think it worth his while to take the trouble to perjure himself any longer. He was weary of her, and did not care to conceal it from her.

She had seen his growing indifference, and her love had seemed to increase as his diminished ; for I fear at first she had cared but very little for him. But it is part of the contradictory nature of woman that she should love the man who has wronged her ; and now Alice seemed to feel that her whole life was staked upon his faith and affection.

Then came the dreadful awakening.

He stayed from her weeks and months at a time, and did not condescend to explain his absence. She grew jealous, and then he did not take the trouble to disguise from her that she had reason to be jealous.

Her heart was growing hard now, but yet she suffered terribly. For he was all the world to her—not in the sense that he had been in the time of her humiliation and distress. He was all the world to her now, because of the desolation he had brought round her. She had no tie in the world save her unhappy relation to him. She had no friend in the world but the man who had been her worst enemy, and who was severing even that bitter bond, and becoming utterly indifferent.

She saw no one now save the French *danseuse*, who occasionally visited her, and sometimes brought with her a lady friend, who was English by birth, and dropped her “h’s” like a Briton, and who, when pressed to take some refreshment, pronounced in favour of “a little neat gin.”

Alice did not like her English friend, but the French woman won upon her greatly. She was a clever woman, this opera

dancer, as she described herself to be, and could talk French philosophy in a convincing manner, and without revealing the cloven foot too startlingly. Her company was a sort of moral dram-drinking for Alice, who found a temporary refuge from remorse and grief in the brilliant sophistries and wicked worldly wisdom of Mademoiselle Rosalie.

And did Rosalie care for her "dear young friend, *cette chère Alix*?" I fear not; for she was a very old friend of Henry Cormack's, and it was at his instigation that she had first sought to make Alice's acquaintance in order to poison her mind and lure her towards the evil snares that he was setting for her soul. Nay, even now she was working upon Alice to serve the Captain's purpose.

Was Rosalie so fond of Henry Cormack? Not a bit, nor had she ever cared for him. But she would do a good deal for any one who would give her a new shawl or a new dress; and, moreover, having sunk herself, she was only too ready to help to drag others down. Now, though she was a thoroughly bad woman, one might have forgiven her almost anything but that; for if a woman who has been deceived by the man she trusted becomes hard and cruel, and revenges upon the race wrongs inflicted by the individual, we must not wonder greatly; but that she should find a delight in casting down a sister into the jaws of destruction, is wickedness unaccountable. It is leaguings with those who have wronged her, and whom she desires to punish. It is the very perversity of wickedness.

Alice confided all her troubles to Rosalie, little supposing that her confidante was a mere spy.

One day she had been complaining more bitterly than usual of the neglect with which Henry Cormack had treated her for many months.

"And he won't write a line, even though I have begged him to do so over and over again. And I owe for my rent, and I haven't a penny to pay it with."

"But," said her friend with a shrug, "what will you? A man cannot be 'eternally constant' for ever!"

"Ah, yes—if he really loved——"

"Bah! Loved! But is it not incredible that this girl, so old, is not yet aware that men cannot love?"

"Not love, Rosalie?"

"Certainly, without doubt. It is that which I have stated. Men can desire, can admire, can caress, can make a great deal of—but to love, oh, no! my dear Alice. It is not their fault, poor things. They have not the power."

"Then no woman should love or trust them."

"But to love is our nature, we women. To trust is our

weakness. But my little one, we have the revenge with us. We can deceive."

Alice was horrified at the idea of practising deceit, even towards the man who had deceived her.

"Go, go, little goose. You must think of this. If a man will not be constant—if he tires after a time, it must be that one looks out for a successor to the abdicated."

Alice shuddered.

"Oh, foolish," said her friend, smiling, "see you not that it is you who choose now? *Autrefois*, it was he who selected you; now you throw the handkerchief, my sultana. And who is it that shall be strong enough to resist those azure eyes, that hair of the cloth of gold, and the skin of rubies and cream? Not I, *ma foi*, if I were a man."

Alice shook her head, and declared that she could never learn this lesson.

But she began to dress with greater care than she had shown for a long time, and she bestowed more pains upon dressing her hair—poor tarnished golden hair.

The keen-eyed Frenchwoman noticed this, and smiled her quiet wicked smile.

"But they are droll, these young girls."

And before long Alice noticed that wherever she went she was watched by a tall, dark, handsome youth, whose attention, however, had nothing disrespectful in it.

The old demon of vanity, which had never more than slumbered in her heart since the time when he assisted the other evil passions to work her ruin, awoke and whispered to her that this was a conquest. Then she began to recall Rosalie's words, and to make excuses to her own conscience. Henry Cormack was deserting her, and she should be left friendless and penniless.

And this man evidently admired her, which Alice thought, with a glance at the glass, was not to be greatly wondered at.

Of course Rosalie was not long in observing Alice's new admirer, and immediately finessed and intrigued on her friend's behalf—not altogether against Alice's wish; and the upshot was that she made the acquaintance of her unknown, who proved to be the son of a nobleman, and very wealthy.

"*Ma foi, Henri, mon cher*," said the Frenchwoman to herself, as she watched the two talking earnestly together, as they sat on a bench in the park, where they had appointed, by letter, to meet, Rosalie going to play propriety, "*ma foi, le bon diable* is going out of his way to relieve you of a bad bargain. You are a favourite with his serene highness, my friend. And now to let you know of this."



That night Rosalie dropped a little note into the post for Captain Cormack, and the next day he paid her a visit. The two amiable creatures laid their heads together, and devised an excellent plan.

At the next meeting of Alice and her new admirer, Rosalie, in course of conversation, expressed a wish to go to the Crystal Palace the next day to hear a concert that was announced. Alice fell into the snare and said that she should like to go too ; and little wonder, for she had led a dull and lonely life for a long time, and she had seen little pleasure. The young peer declared nothing would give him greater pleasure than to escort them ; so the arrangement was made, and next morning Alice, Rosalie, and he were wandering amid the lovely flowers that deck the Sydenham slopes with all the brilliant hues of the rainbow.

They were just descending one of the terraces, Rosalie hanging a little behind, and Alice leaning on the arm of her companion and listening to some whispered gallantry, when an exclamation of surprise caused them to look up. It was Captain Cormack.

Alice was ready to sink to the ground. Her companion, who immediately guessed the state of affairs, felt in some doubt about what was likely to follow. Rosalie only looked on with some slight curiosity.

Henry Cormack advanced, smiling. He bowed to Alice's admirer, and shook her by the hand.

"I am exceedingly glad," he said in a cold, distinct voice, "that you have solved a difficulty which has perplexed me for some time. As you have selected this gentleman for your companion and friend, I can only say I withdraw all claim on your further consideration, and resign readily in his favour. I wish you good-bye."

So saying, he raised his hat and walked rapidly away.

Of course a scene followed ; for though she had ceased to love him, there was one tie—the last hope of her restoration to her good name—which bound Alice to Henry Cormack in spite of indifference and disagreements. Now that was broken, and with it she seemed to lose her hold upon hope. It was another step downward in the deepening darkness.

To do Alice's companion justice, he did not hesitate to do all in his power to make restitution of the advantages which she had sacrificed on his account.

In a few days Alice was mistress of a charming little villa, furnished most luxuriously and expensively. But she could not drown the voice of conscience, or blind her eyes to the knowledge that she had fallen further away from the right,

and with but little excuse. Before long the distress of mind she suffered had such an effect upon her nerves that she was laid up with a fever, that compelled her to keep her bed for nearly a month. Even after her recovery she was very weak, and like most invalids, fretful and impatient. A coolness ensued between her and the young peer, which was never to be removed, for in a short time he was sent abroad on a diplomatic mission, from which he did not return for many years.

Behold Alice then left once more alone, thrown again into the society of Rosalie for want of companionship, and following her fatal guidance down the gloomy descent whence it is so hard to return.

Every day there dies within her some lingering spark of virtue or goodness. Every day her heart hardens, and her perceptions are blunted. She has become almost a stranger to tears, save when she sheds them on the mock sentiment of a trashy novel or the sham passions of the stage. She has forgotten what it is to blush, and her eyes, with a strange wild light growing in them, are resolutely turned from the past. She has bidden adieu to hope, to remorse, to shame. She has ceased to believe that there is any other love more exalted than a passing passion for a pretty face; and she has grown covetous, for it is only with money that she can purchase the anodyne which makes life bearable.

But when the beauty of the soul is blotted out, it is ordained that outward loveliness shall suffer too. There has come into Alice's face a hardness almost amounting to coarseness; her cheeks are hollow, and the eyes that burn above them burn with unnatural light like the lamps of a charnel-house—for the heart is dead within. And her once so silken-soft hair has lost the glory it had, and as it falls neglected on her shoulders, is dull and dim, and lustreless.

So her beauty leaves her, for beauty is but an outward revelation of the beauty of the heart.

But we must not watch this sad figure further along its dread path. Let her pass on forlorn amid forlorn revelry, passionless amid a mad semblance of passion and delight—the ghost of a woman once pure, and beautiful, and good, but now lost, desolate, abandoned. And this is man's handiwork! And the world is full of such fair gardens of God that should be—such weed-grown, down-trampled wildernesses that are.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## THOUGHTS OF THE PAST—PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

THERE was not much sentiment or romance, as a rule, in plain, homely Marian Carlyon. You would not indeed have looked for any weakness of the sort in that poor, pale face, whence the bloom and flush of girlhood had fled for ever. But then there are periods in the life of all of us—of the plainest and homeliest—when like a seemingly sleeping ocean, the heart suddenly heaves and bursts all barriers; when an irresistible flood of fierce emotions bursts in upon us, and sweeping over us, changes the whole aspect of our natures for awhile. And such a heart-heaving and such a resistless tide of feeling were Marian's after that momentous meeting in the Mile End Road.

A meeting in the Mile End Road. It does not sound romantic, does it? If I had called it an encounter in the Bay of Naples, it would not have jarred perhaps. But in this life the most romantic incidents are not always laid in the most appropriate scenery. What tragedies are enacted in places with such names as Wapping or Hackney, and on what trivial and vulgar things do great events turn. The very crisis of Marian's life was this meeting in the Mile End Road—and to what was it due? To the drunkenness of the greengrocer's van-driver. But for the collision with that very commonplace object the Romford 'bus, the van would have rolled on its way rejoicing, and Marian and James would have passed each other within a few yards, and never have known, perhaps, how near they had been. Fate builds up our lives of strange materials, utterly incongruous, and often laughably mean and seemingly unsuitable.

The meeting in the Mile End Road woke the deepest feelings of Marian's nature, and for a time the plain, homely little woman was living in an ideal region of bliss. All the dark clouds which had so long and apparently so hopelessly closed in the horizon, had lifted and were scattered, and the golden light of joy and perfect happiness poured in upon her. Her poor lodging was hung with golden tissue, and all the air was perfume.

The fountain of youth and young hopes was unsealed in her heart, and its waters made pleasant the path of life. The briars and thorns were overgrown and disarmed by the

thick blossoms of joy, and comfort, and love which had sprung up as if by a spell at the mere sound of James's voice.

She was once more the Marian Carlyon of old times, only made more beautiful by trial, and suffering, and toil. And so with the girlish tenderness of old days, but not without an inward misgiving that it was romantic and foolish, she wrote to James, and appointed to meet him at that dear old trysting place in the park where—how long ago?—the barriers that had existed between them had been broken down for the first time, and they stood face to face, and spoke heart to heart—two people ordained by Heaven man and wife.

It was changed, that well-remembered spot!

I suppose the Chief Commissioner of Public Works cannot be expected to know all the shrines and consecrated plots of earth which he ruthlessly overthrows and sweeps away in his pursuit of landscape gardening. But he had gone out of his way, one would suppose, to efface all traces of the quiet nook where James Trefusis had first dared to tell his love to Marian Carlyon. He had come to the conclusion that there were some unaccommodated equestrians in the neighbourhood of Belgravia or Westminster, to whom Rotten Row was either not accessible or not agreeable. So he had devised a most ingenious cantering ground for these individuals which had several advantages. First of all, it was so narrow that two persons could not ride abreast in it; secondly, it was so thickly set with trees that riders were in momentary danger of being swept off their horses; and thirdly, it ended abruptly in a row of spiked railings, and was so narrow just there, that horse and rider alike had every possible chance of impalement, and very little room for turning to escape the peril. Altogether, it would be difficult to conceive a more useful, ornamental, and reasonable way of spending the public money. And it was, and is, so popular among equestrians that, from the day when it was thrown open to the public until this present writing, not even the late lamented Mr. G. P. R. James himself could have seen two horsemen there at a time. But then it makes a capital place for the wheeling of perambulators by nurses, and the wheedling of nurses by the soldiers from the neighbouring barracks.

Of course, as the space for this great work had to be taken from the park, the walk which had originally run along there was thrown back a little. And in the fresh laying out of the ground consequent on this, the little clump of lilacs was uprooted, and the snug little seat beneath them was removed to quite another part of the park.

Marian could have found it in her heart to cry when she found the dear old place so completely altered. The change brought before her very forcibly the lapse of time.

It was not possible, thinking as often as she did of Alice, that she should visit the scene of their frequent meetings without calling to mind her sister, and wondering where she could be, and what she could be doing that she never heard or saw anything of her, and that repeated advertisements in the *Times* had failed to elicit any trace of her whereabouts.

She was not aware that a crafty enemy had been working quietly and cunningly to defeat all her efforts to obtain tidings of Alice. Henry Cormack was not the man to be very easily caught tripping in the matter of precautions against the discovery of his roguery and rascality. He had impressed upon Alice the necessity for concealing her name from everyone—even from her dear friend Rosalie. Henry Cormack knew that dear friend's character too well to expose her to the temptation of the reward offered by Marian. As for Alice herself, all he had to do was to keep her from seeing the *Times* while her sister was in the habit of advertising in its pages; and in this he found little difficulty, for Alice was as careless and incurious about news as a girl could well be.

Marian was still musing on her sister's disappearance, when that mysterious sixth sense, for which psychologists have not yet found a name, told her that James Trefusis was approaching. That sixth sense which belongs to the heart (or brain, which is the same thing) just as sight belongs to the eye, or hearing to the ear, did not deceive her, for in another second or two he was by her side.

"My own!"

"Dearest James!"

In those two greetings, simple as they look when written down, there was a meaning which a whole language could hardly find expression for.

He drew her arm within his with the happy unconscious air of a man who is claiming nothing more than is his own right. And then he led her away to a retired seat, neither speaking a word, because their hearts, too full for utterance, were communing in silence.

Then James began his story from the beginning, and told Marian how he had succeeded in selling his patent, and how prosperous and wealthy he had become. All this Marian knew well, but she did not interrupt him. She had hungered so very very long in her weary self-seclusion for the sound of that voice, that it seemed now as if she could listen to it for ever.

"All my good fortune and prosperity, Marian, could have no charm for me. I was sick and weary of the world—sick of the fortune which kept aloof when I most needed it, and showered down upon me when I had no longer any desire for it. I wanted to creep away somewhere and go to sleep, to wake up some day in heaven, and find you. But they would not let me rest; and I felt that it was better to struggle on a bit, in the hopes of our meeting again by chance—as we have done. If it had not been for that hope, I should not have cared to go on working. I should have flung all the money and fame to the winds, and shut my door against the world, and all its interests and troubles, long ago!"

"Then you always hoped to meet me again? I did not think you would have known me, for I am greatly altered, James."

"I could have sworn to those dear gray eyes of yours anywhere, my Marian. Altered! Do you suppose, when a man really and truly loves a woman, he does not know the changes that time will work. True love is not blind——"

"Oh, yes it is, James, for I know yours is true, and yet you cannot see what a poor, disfigured creature I am. Honestly now, James!—have I not got very plain indeed?"

She laid her hand on his arm, and looked into his face with her eager gray eyes, trying to read his answer before he spoke. And she did read it, for a smile of infinite happiness sweetened the tender expression of her mouth before he had answered a word.

"My Marian," he said; "still my Marian. Not altered the tiniest wee bit in the world to me! But how anxious you are about your looks, puss. Have you grown vain?"

She shook her head gravely.

"It is not on account of my poor plain face that I am so distressed, James. But you are so determined to make me your wife, whether I will or no,"—she smiled tenderly as she said this—"that I am anxious for your sake. What should I do if some day they were to say to you, 'How could you ever think of marrying a woman so disfigured as that?' It would break my heart to think you were ever so little ashamed of me."

"I should be utterly unworthy of you, my own one, if I could be that for an instant. Besides, do not I know your value, treasure of mine?—beauty that cannot fade, the beauty of the heart and the mind. Your face is dearer to me and fairer than the loveliest creation artist ever dreamed of."

"I cannot doubt you, James. I could not love you as I do if I doubted your lightest word; so I must believe this, and

the belief is of infinite comfort to me. Ah, you do not know what it cost me to tear myself away from you when first the consciousness of this affliction came upon me."

"You did not believe me, then?"

"I did not, even then know what it is to love truly—much as I loved you. I have learnt to love since then, dearest, with a love that has grown and strengthened in absence, and despair, and separation."

There was no foolish hesitation in this woman's words, when she thus laid open the secrets of her heart. Why should there be? The perfect equality of the highest and purest passion that can exist between man and woman is due to the communion of soul with soul—of essences too lofty to be influenced by the weakness of this world, or considerations of the relation of the sexes. Marian felt that there was nothing to blush at or conceal in the noble love she bore to this man. She had been prepared, when she thought by so acting she was doing him the best service, to part from him and bear away into solitude the love which was more than half her life, there to nurse it with sad memories and irremediable sorrow. And if she could do this, why should she not bestow it upon him, now that she might do so without reserve or false modesty? It enhanced a gift, which real modesty made her consider a poor one, to tell all its virtues and the price which it had cost her. Any man who has ever been blessed with that most precious of all Heaven's gifts, the great and abiding affection of a true woman, will know that she never seemed so truly a woman as when she looked him straight in the eyes and said, clearly and deliberately, "I love you!" And he will also understand why James Trefusis sighed a great sigh of relief and happiness when Marian spoke of the deep love she bore him, without a blush and without a change of tone, as if it were as natural a part of her being as that she breathed and moved.

"My poor child," he said, stroking the hand she had placed in his, "you must have suffered indeed. And what weary work yours must have been."

"No, James! I won't be ungrateful to my work. Work was my companion and comforter. But for it I must have sunk indeed into listlessness and despair. But I toiled on, for work's sake—hardly because I hoped."

"And I, too, worked on—but I worked to win, Marian. I was desponding at times, and almost ready to relinquish the thought of our meeting again, but I determined to work for your sake—even though we never might meet, but because I could say to myself, 'I am working that I may win the woman

I love.' But it was very dark at times, darling—only the remembered light in those dear eyes lighted me to my toil."

In this way these two people talked over their trials and toils, in the enjoyment of their triumph. For it seemed to them that they had suffered to the full now, and were to take the reward of their labour and of their patience. Are they fated to enjoy it yet?

By-and-by Marian, having told the long story of her suffering and the struggle she had had ere she was fortunate enough to be appointed the mistress of St. Pacifica's schools, spoke of Alice, and told James of her mysterious disappearance.

James was more alarmed than he cared to show, for he remembered the communication Alice had made to him. He asked Marian if she had heard of her sister's attachment to Lord Lacquoigne's son. Marian shook her head mournfully, and said, "Yes; it was that which led to her being discharged from her ladyship's service."

"Did she suppose that this Captain Vorian," James asked, with a bitter emphasis on the title, "had anything to do with Alice's subsequent disappearance?"

Marian could not tell, but she believed not. Captain Vorian had since married the eldest daughter of Mr. Orr, her old employer.

"That old scoundrel's daughter! I hope she is only half as bad as her father, and then perhaps poor Alice will be in some degree revenged for the cruelty she suffered at Lady Lacquoigne's hands. Did I ever tell you of my interview with Orr at his office in the City? I never was nearer a breach of the peace in my life than I was then. But I believe the old villain will suffer for it yet. He cannot go on much longer—the golden idol has feet of clay, and fall he must before many years are over, and then won't I rejoice!"

"James, James! I'm afraid you have grown sadly revengeful."

"By Heaven, a man does not suffer or see others suffer, as I have done, without recording a few vows of vengeance; and I have several. There is your father's murderer, Henry Cormack—the man of whom I am to purchase the foundry, by-the-bye, at the end of this year—I have a bitter score to settle with him, though I own it is difficult to see any way to an excuse for bringing him to an account. Then there is old Orr; and I suppose—I fear—there is also this Captain Vorian. With all and each, if I can only see my opportunity, I have a heavy reckoning to make; and as sure as I live and breathe,



when that time comes, they shall have cause to remember me!"

"Oh, James, it terrifies me to hear you speak in that way. We should forgive our enemies——"

"So I will—when I have done with them. There are some wrongs inflicted on those we love—inflicted in the most heartless and agonising forms—which drive all the forgiveness out of a man and harden his heart. And these are such wrongs, that I can't and won't forgive them!"

Marian saw it was useless to argue with him now, for the memory of these men's misdeeds was rousing all the anger in his nature.

Did he really mean all these vindictive threats?

Well, I incline to believe not. But the best men are carried away sometimes by their scorn and anger at wickedness which they cannot understand the pleasure or motive of. To James Trefusis, Henry Cormack and Mr. Orr, instead of seeming men whose callous hearts and unrestrained passions blunted their perceptions of right and wrong, appeared to be fiends who delighted in iniquity for its own sake. So just in the degree that he was himself in reality generous and earnest, he raged against these demons, until, without knowing it, he was nourishing designs quite as unchristian and improper as theirs.

Marian turned the conversation to other subjects, and James's thirst for revenge died out. They talked of the future, and it was agreed that as soon as Cormack resigned possession of the foundry and Polvrehan, they were to marry, and go down to settle in their native valley. How bright the future looked!

In the meantime Marian resigned her appointment at the school of St. Pacifica's. But as there was some time yet to elapse before James would get possession of Polvrehan, and as there was some difficulty in finding a successor, she consented, at the special request of the Rev. Mr. Rudgeworth, to continue to manage the schools until they could meet with a suitable teacher.

James was a little opposed to this at first; but Marian declared she was sorry to part with her little folk, and should like to stay with them as long as she could. She further pointed out that by so doing she would be making some return for the kindness with which she had been treated.

"But you must be very weary of teaching, Marian."

"Nay, I am used to it now, James; and, besides, I shall hardly feel that I deserve to win if I do not work as long as I am needed."

So James consented, and Marian promised Mr. Rudgeworth to stay; and it was agreed that her leaving should not be mentioned to the children until the day of her departure came, because she was a favourite with her pupils, and they would perhaps become unsettled and troublesome when they heard she was going.

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## CHAPTER XL.

## "COULD IT HAVE BEEN A GHOST?"

THE Honourable Henry Vorian is lounging over his breakfast in solitary grandeur, the Honourable Mrs. Vorian having elected to take that meal in her bed-room. The Honourable Henry is not particularly distressed to hear it, and discusses his lonely repast with a cheerful appetite. He has just taken up the paper and turned his chair round to the fire, when a knock comes at the door.

"Come in."

A footman enters.

"M' lord, Sir—m' lord wishes to speak with you, Sir, if you are disengaged."

"Ask him up."

The flunkey disappears, and the Honourable Henry Vorian begins to muse on his parent's visit.

"My father, eh? I wonder what the deuce he wants? Not money again, I hope"—you see his lordship has been bleeding his son just as her ladyship has been drawing on Honoria—"Not money again, I hope. He can't have it, if it is, for I'm cleaned out, and her ladyship up stairs is not in an amiable mood, so I can't get anything out of her. Besides, hang it all, I didn't marry to support my father and mother."

By the time this thought has occurred to this very dutiful and affectionate son, Lord Lacquoigne is ushered in.

His son does not rise to greet him; but there had never been more ceremony than affection between them, so his lordship takes a seat on the opposite side of the fire.

"You're late this morning, Henry."

"Oh, no; about the usual time."

"I suppose you're in training for Parliamentary duties, eh? They do keep you up doosid late in the Commons."

"Oh, I've given up all notion of that. Scrooby said it would

cost about a thousand pounds, there's such a confounded lot of freemen in the place, and tin is rather scarce with us just now, so I told him not to bother any more about it."

"I am sorry for that, because just now the Government has such a narrow majority that they are ready to do almost anything for a vote, and Arthur is old enough now. I dare say it might be done cheaper. You'll reconsider it, won't you?"

"No. I've decided; and there's an end of it."

"I'm very sorry to hear it. You had a splendid career before you, and it would have fitted you for your duties in the Upper House."

"Very likely. But may I ask if I am indebted for this visit to your desire to see me in Parliament?"

"No, Henry—I have come on a rather delicate matter."

("Confound it," thought the young man; "he does want some money, that's clear.")

"What may it be, my lord?"

"I really hardly know how to begin. But it is due to our name and family that I should not hesitate—to—In short—well, you see, I—I don't think you can be quite aware, Henry, of the talk which is occasioned by Honoria's going about so much with Cantlow. He's a designing scoundrel, that fellow—a low blackguard. You should hear what is said of him at Noodle's. I was standing in the bay-window with old Major-General Tampion the other day, when Cantlow rode by in the phaeton with Honoria, and the old gentleman spoke of him in the most severe terms, and said he thought you could hardly be aware of the sort of man he is, or you would forbid him your house. Gad, Sir! all town is in a buzz about him and your wife."

"Let town buzz," said Henry angrily. "I don't care a straw for that. If I've confidence in Honoria's good sense, that's quite enough. We have rows in plenty as it is, and I don't want to have any additional ones just because a lot of scandal-mongering dowagers set their venomous old tongues wagging—I hope they may wither. Besides, the beggar saves me a good deal of trouble, for I hate lugging women about to shows and fêtes and all such infernal foolery."

"You have not the spirit or the feeling of a Vorian, Sir, or you wouldn't suffer it."

"By Jove, I'm rather sick of feeling like a Vorian, my lord. I wish I were somebody else."

"So do I, most heartily, Sir."

"Thank you."

"At any rate, if you don't respect the family name, you should regard your own character."

"Oh, I'll look after that."

"Well, if you do, I think you'll find that you have the character of being a fool who is blind to his own dishonour. You're a laughing-stock, Sir, egad—a regular laughing-stock at all the clubs."

"Curse 'em! I'll teach 'em to laugh!" exclaimed Henry, goaded to anger by his father's taunts.

"I'm afraid you won't frighten any of them because you have got the reputation of being afraid of Cantlow."

"The devil I have! Then it's time I took some steps to prove the contrary."

Lord Lacquoigne having thus succeeded in awakening his son to a sense of the family dignity, took his departure before very long.

"Where's your mistress?" asked Henry Vorian of the footman who came to clear the breakfast table.

"I'll inquire, Sir," said that domestic.

Henry presently learnt that the Honourable Mrs. Vorian was in her boudoir, whereupon he sent up word to say he was desirous of speaking with her if she were not engaged. On receiving a request to step up to the boudoir, he obeyed, not without an uncomfortable feeling—the fore-knowledge of a very unpleasant storm coming.

"What are your desires?" asks the lady languidly as he enters the room.

"My desire," her husband answers brusquely, opening the campaign at once, "my desire is that that confounded puppy Cantlow shall not come here in the way he does."

"Pardon me, but he is not a visitor of yours, and does not in any way interfere with you. My desire is that he shall come."

"And I forbid it. By Jove, Madam, I shall have to believe the scandals which are afloat about you if you persist in this conduct."

"Henry Vorian, you are a fool—and what is more a vulgar fool. How dare you insult me in that way?"

"You shouldn't provoke me."

"I do not."

"You do. You refuse to obey my directions."

"At the risk of provoking you ever so much, I intend to do that."

"Have a care, Madam."

"Of what, may I ask?"

"Of bringing that adventurer into this house. By Jove, I'll kick him out."

"I think not."

"Egad, Madam, he *shan't* come."

"Sir, Major Cantlow is an honourable gentleman, who takes pity upon the wife whom you neglect and insult. If you dare to be guilty of the slightest rudeness to him, you shall suffer for it. I will quit this roof and return to my father."

"I wish to Heaven you would."

"The matter will not end there, Sir, for you may rely on my father's exposing your treatment of me. The law shall liberate me from ties which you disregard; and the grounds on which I shall demand my release shall be made public, to your disgrace, Sir."

"Come, will you give up this man's acquaintance?"

"No, I will not. It would be a base and cowardly return for the honourable and disinterested kindness he has shown me!"

"I'll call the beggar out and shoot him."

"That is mere idle bluster. People don't duel in these days; and if you did, you would probably find him the better shot."

"Come, Honoria, let us argue this calmly. My father has been here to speak of the rumours which are circulated about you and this fellow. Now I have every confidence in your good sense, but really——"

"But really I decline to condescend to any argument on the matter."

"You impracticable devil!" muttered the honourable gentleman to himself.

He was quite at a loss what to do. He had not expected open rebellion and defiance.

"Now, Sir, having, I presume, indulged in enough insult and brutality towards me, you will not object to leave me."

"I shall order the servants to refuse this scoundrel admittance."

"If by that abusive word—which you would not dare use in his presence—you intend Major Cantlow, you can spare yourself the trouble. He has left town for a couple of days. During that interval you will have time to reflect before you take a step which, I warn you most distinctly, will lead to much that will be most painful and embarrassing."

Henry Vorian gave an impatient "Pish!" and strode up and down the room.

"I think we had better come to that understanding. It will give you two days to decide what course you intend to pursue. You must let me put my position clearly before you. I consented to marry you for the position and independence of a married woman——"

"And a title!"

"My father was wealthy enough to buy your beggarly title three times over, so that insult falls harmless. I repeat, I married you because I was tired of being kept in restraint, and led about like an animal for sale, and because I wanted the independent position of a married woman. Considering what I paid for that freedom, by marrying a man of your tastes and disposition, I am not in the least inclined to let go a hair's breadth of my privilege. I care no more for Major Cantlow than I do for you, and could give up either to-morrow without a murmur; but it is the principle that I uphold, and will uphold. I am mistress of my own actions, and will not be dictated to in the smallest degree. There! now you have my case. You had better go to that precious father of yours, and lay it before him, and take his advice. Until then, good-morning!"

She made him a stately bow, which he returned, and then left the room.

Now there were two things which Honoria said during this conversation which were not exactly true.

She said, in the first place, that Major Cantlow had left town for two days. Whereas she was quite well aware that he had promised to come that very afternoon and convoy her to the Botanical Gardens.

She said, in the second place, that she cared no more for Major Cantlow than she did for her husband. Whereas, while she hated the latter, she really entertained for the former a passion which he had carefully fanned by constant attentions and fed with delicate compliments.

On the whole, then, we may, I think, set down that grand declaration of her intentions and wishes in marrying to a desire to conceal her real object in thus obstinately declining to discontinue her acquaintance with the major.

Henry Vorian left his house in no very enviable frame of mind. A man who has open rebellion and flat defiance staring him in the face at home, is under any circumstances not pleasantly situated; but when the reason of the revolt is one that so nearly touches his honour, the awkwardness of his position is infinitely increased. He was not so persuaded of his wife's sincerity in that last matrimonial declaration of hers as to overlook the fact that her refusal to give up her friendship with the major was capable of a very disastrous construction. He could not close his eyes to that.

What was he to do? Perhaps, after all, the counsel she had given was the best. He would go and ask his father's advice on the matter.

Lord Lacquoigne was utterly at a loss. The outburst on the part of the hitherto easy-going Honoria was more than startling—it was ominous. The aristocratic nose having been called into the consultation, failed to hit off the right scent; but, nevertheless, the wisest suggestion thrown out in conclave was her ladyship's, who proposed that his lordship and Henry should go to Mr. Orr the next day.

Henry Vorian did not care to go home under existing circumstances, so he spent the rest of the day at the mansion in Mayfair. It was not a cheerful day. His father, and mother, and himself, as they dined off scrag of mutton, served up on silver dishes by several footmen, felt that it was anything but a dinner of herbs with content—though the cook had tried to palm off the mutton as lamb by sending up mint sauce with it.

These three guilty people looked at one another, and felt that the just punishment of their own wrong-doing was coming upon them. They had turned a solemn service, which should link hearts together, into a mere formula of the money-market—they had bid Mammon chain together those whom God had not joined, and they were reaping the reward of their iniquity.

Late in the evening, Henry Vorian bid his noble parents good-night, lit his cigar, and sauntered off homewards.

It was a sultry autumn night, not altogether fine, for there were heavy banks of cloud resting on the horizon, and scattered troops of rainy-looking vapours occasionally scudded across the sky, obscuring a pallid and watery moon. It was a night quite in keeping with Henry Vorian's state of mind, and he walked slowly along Piccadilly, just keeping his cigar alight rather than really smoking, and watching with half-attentive eyes the crowds that passed him. The crowds were the ordinary London crowds, but with one or two characteristic ingredients belonging to Piccadilly. There were swells in evening costume going to or returning from balls, dinners, or evening parties; and there were gaily-dressed women with impudent smiles, and cheeks whose roses were red-*d*ole; and there were the sleepy drivers of huge carts of vegetables on their way to Covent Garden.

At the corner of a street, Henry Vorian's attention was attracted to an itinerant coffee stall, whereat a cabman, a crossing-sweeper, and one or two other night-birds, male and female, were standing. A flaring naphtha lamp lit up the group, and shed a glow on the faces of passers-by. There was an odd Remembrantish effect about the scene, and he stopped for a moment to look at it.

As he turned from it to continue his walk homeward, a

shrill, unnatural laugh, just behind him made him look back. He saw two women entering the circle of light. The yellow, smoky glare fell on their faces.

The one nearest him was pale and thin. Her yellow hair, heavy with the moisture of night, was carelessly looped up, as if it had fallen from the comb. Her blue eyes were sunken, and had a cold, hard stare. Her cheeks were hollow, and the shrill laugh—it was hers—that had attracted Henry Vorian's attention, ended in a sharp husky cough that seemed to pierce her like a knife.

Henry Vorian started, as well he might, for a spectre of the past stood before him. He uttered an involuntary exclamation. The woman looked up and saw him—and then after one short glance, turned, with a strange plaintive cry, and fled. As soon as he could recover his presence of mind, he followed her; but there were carts and cabs passing at the time, and carriages from Lady Palmerston's assembly, and the streets were crowded, and he failed to catch sight of her again.

"Great Heaven, could it have been a ghost?" he murmured, as he once more turned his face homeward.

Alas! Henry Vorian, not the ghost of a dead woman—would it were! It is the ghost of departed beauty and innocence—of a living woman.



## CHAPTER XLI.

## THE MAJOR FOR ONCE RELUCTANT TO DO A WRONG.

"To what is all this bringing us?"

"To what, indeed?"

The first speaker is the Honourable Honoria Vorian; the second Major Cantlow.

The Honourable Henry Vorian had not long quitted his mansion, when, on the principle of the Dutch weather-glass, Major Cantlow entered it. Honoria, with some slight perturbation and not a few eruptive-looking blushes, told him all that had taken place between her and her husband—or rather as much of it as put her in the position of a woman who was undergoing misery and suspicion on his (Major Cantlow's) account.

The major pensively fondled one dyed whisker, and wondered what was to come of this. Honoria, who knew less of the world, propounded that question at once.

She fully expected—from her experience of men who loved other people's wives, an experience founded on the perusal of ordinary novels—that the major would open his arms, and invite her to fall upon his noble though padded bosom, in the touching words, "Whatever comes, you have at least a refuge here!"

But the major was not such an ass.

A man who lives, if not exactly on his wits, at all events of his neighbour's want of the article, is not in the habit of committing himself rashly to any step. The major was such a man, and he did not make any attempt to invite Honoria to repose on his chest until he had calculated how far such a step would resemble the killing of the goose to which he was indebted for golden eggs—an act of ansericide that he had not the remotest intention of being guilty of.

A rapid review of the facts of the case reminded him of one thing—that Mrs. Vorian owed her wealth, not to her husband, but her father. It remained to be proved whether the latter would still continue his generous allowance to her if she quitted the husband he had selected for her. Thoroughly impressed with this conviction, the major did not open his arms and offer Honoria a refuge from cruelty and neglect within their amiable shelter. He took her hand respectfully, dropped

his voice to the lowest note in its compass, and said with great solemnity,—

"Did I merely consult the selfish dictates of my heart—the hopes and dreams of which, Honoria, cannot have been quite concealed from you—I would bid you seek beneath my humble roof the devotion and regard which you do not find here. I would ask you—may I say it?—to spurn and bid defiance to the hypocritical horror of a short-sighted world in the deep and unbounded love which I can no longer conceal that I bear for you, Honoria! But I must not be selfish. I must prove my affection for you by refusing to make myself unutterably happy at the cost of suffering to you. I am a poor man—a penniless—a worse than penniless one. I should but offer you a share of penury and wretchedness. It must not be."

"Oh, Alfred, you forget that I am rich!"

"Well, you see," said the major, dropping unguardedly into a business-like tone in his deep interest about the matter, "your allowance depends entirely on your father, and he might withdraw that any day, and would, most likely, when he had heard that we had run—had determined to unite our fortunes for good and evil despite the malice and envy of a cold and heartless world!" Here, you will observe, the major rose to his subject again.

"My father is too much attached to me to allow me to suffer because I follow the dictates of my heart."

"If you could be quite sure of that, why you know I don't see the slightest obstacle in the world."

"At all events, I can apply to him at once for such a sum of money as shall secure us against want for some time to come."

"Ah, yes. But you may as well make it something handsome. What is the limit now that you think you might go to?"

And then the major began to discuss with Honoria the exact amount at which it would be worth his while to run away with her.

You must not suppose that Honoria even was so blind as not to see how mercenary the major was. She had been born and brought up in a family where one of the earliest notions instilled into the young mind was that whatever people do for you is done for money. She detected the major's baseness at once. It was a severe blow to her, for hitherto she had been under the foolish impression that he really loved her. But it was too late to withdraw now. She had admitted her regard for him, and had in fact almost proposed their

elopement in so many words. Then again she could not be more unhappy with this man than she was with her husband, and in flying with him she would at least bring shame and misery upon one who had wedded her without love and neglected her without pity.

But I am bound to allow that Honoria made her unholy contract with Major Cantlow with her eyes open.

You wonder, perhaps. But revenge is a stronger passion than love, and women especially, I fear, will make any sacrifices at its shrine. If you doubt the statement, look around you and note what is passing. What happened a little while ago? Why, the University of Oxford, which, I take it, is the very personification and embodiment of the middle-aged feminine mind, proved the truth of what I say, and rejected a man who was essentially the representative of scholarship and all that graces the University,—and all for a passing political squabble. As if Alma Mater had any more to do with politics than Mater Familias! But A. M. lost her temper, and accordingly lost a representative who did her honour.

Honoria Vorian was stung to the heart by the discovery of Cantlow's baseness. But the discovery did not drive her from the step she meditated. She either hoped to waken his better feelings, or she intended to make one act help her to vengeance against both her husband and him.

She was too shrewd to let the major see that she noticed the very business-like spirit in which he bargained with her. She discussed the question from the same point of view quite calmly. It was quite possible, she thought, to get a very handsome advance from papa, and to prevail on him to forgive them before it was quite exhausted.

"I will write to papa at once, and press my request very urgently; and I feel sure there is no difficulty. What had you better do?"

The major suggested that he should take the letter to papa.

"Oh, there's no necessity for that; it might look suspicious, I am afraid."

"Ah," thought the major, "she thinks I should sack the money and never come near her again;" but what he said was, "I see every necessity for haste. It is hardly possible that your husband, when he returns, should fail to hear I have been here—and have stayed a considerable time,"—he glanced at the little ormolu clock on the mantelpiece. A fat, fatuous little Cupid on the top was engaged in singeing a gilded butterfly with a torch. "The result would be dis-

astrous. By going to Mr. Orr myself, I might hasten matters."

"You have other arrangements to make."

"Oh, we can get a cab to the station, and be over in France before our absence is discovered." And he thought to himself, it would be a pity to engage a cab unless they were quite sure of the money.

"Marland, my maid, is accustomed to go to papa on similar errands. She will take a cab and go, and be back in an hour. In the meantime I will take advantage of her absence to pack a few things in my trunk, and you can make your preparations. Be at the end of the street with a cab in time to get to the station. Till then farewell."

She held out her face for him to kiss; and so they parted.

"Whew!" whistled the major as soon as he was in the open air. "Here's a pretty go! Whew! It makes me as hot as if I had been marching under a tropical sun. She took me quite by surprise. I did not mean it to go as far as this—by Jove, I didn't. Canty, my boy—Canty, my boy! you've been and gone and put your foot into it considerably! You have lived to your age, and have had the good sense never to take a wife of your own, and now I'm cursed if you're not going to take someone else's! Egad, it only shows what one may be let into without the least intention. Figure in the Divorce Court, eh? Well, what matter? Lots of fine fellows and elegant gentlemen have done the same—and haven't got the money you'll get. Of course there'll be damages; but old Orr must pay them. Still I must confess I should prefer this sort of thing"—and the major brought up his arm as if he held a pistol, and took aim at a lamp-post, closing one little bloodshot eye very deliberately in order to do so accurately.

"It'll be a doose of a thing, though! And she'll be such a confounded tie until she gets broken-in; but then you see, Canty, you don't often get money without some incumbrance. After all, this is only a woman, and you have been hampered with—and got rid of—many a one before this."

So with a gay ghost of a whistle the major struts away to his lodgings, where he packs up his goods and chattels—no very great store—in his portmanteau, pays his landlady, and then goes to call on a few friends, from whom he borrows, whenever he can, small sums of money, in case of disappointment in the papa quarter. For he feels now he has risked all, and must in honour—honour, forsooth!—keep his promise to Honoria, whatever occurs.

The faithful Marland speeds off to Mr. Orr's offices in the

City. She is at first refused admittance ; Mr. Orr is so very busy.

But the letter she carries procures her an entrance into the millionaire's sanctum, where she finds him looking very haggard and ill. He motions Marland to a chair, and takes Honoria's letter over to his desk, where he sits down to read it.

It evidently requires a great mental effort on his part to concentrate his attention on the paper before him. His mind evidently wanders away after he has got through a line or so, and he has to recall it, which he does painfully and with great difficulty.

Marland hears him murmur, "Poor girl! poor girl! What will she do?" and she at once concludes that her mistress has been writing about her domestic unhappiness. But even Marland's conclusions are not invariably sound.

At last, after many fits of abstraction, Mr. Orr succeeds in coming to the end of his daughter's communication. Then he sits for a minute or so with his head resting on his hands, musing. Finally, he rings the bell, and gives some whispered directions to his cashier, who answers the summons. That functionary bows and disappears, and returns about a quarter of an hour afterwards with a small bag of sovereigns and a pile of bank-notes. These Mr. Orr secures in a large envelope, and gives Marland, with a brief note addressed to the Honourable Mrs. Vorian, which he has scribbled off hastily while the cashier was absent.

"Good gracious!" says Honoria, when Marland returns from her errand; "how generous!"

Mr. Orr has sent her about four times the amount of money that she asked for. But when she reads his note she does not seem quite so delighted, and looks puzzled and bewildered.

It is hardly worth while mentioning, except as an instance of the way in which all the movements and relations of great people are known to the world; but when Marland left Mr. Orr's office, a short, commonplace-looking man, who had been lounging against a post opposite the entrance, crossed over, and addressed himself very familiarly to a tall, dark, shabby-genteel individual, who seemed to be waiting about on the look-out for a job.

"Who's that?" asks the short man.

"Oh, her? Why she's his daughter's slavey. The chief aint been or sent, has he?"

"Not to me. But I s'pose he will before long."

"All right."

This conversation, which has been carried on with an air of great carelessness and unconcern, having been brought to a conclusion, the two separate and resume their places and their indifferent bearing.

Marland finds that in her absence the Honourable Mrs. Vorian has been packing up a large trunk. On inquiry, she learns from her mistress that they are about to make a short stay at Brighton, but that the plan has been decided on at very short notice; and as Marland was out, her mistress had to make all the preparations herself.

When she learns that her master has not been home, and that no letters are come, Marland is, I dare say, a little puzzled to think how her mistress can be aware of this very sudden arrangement, but she does not trouble herself enough about it to mention her wonder to anyone.

The evening comes on.

In the quiet dusk of the hour between sunset and moon-rise, Honoria going up stairs for some trifle which she has, it appears, omitted to pack up, passes her child's door. She pauses and listens. She can hear the boy's regular breathing, which tells he is sound asleep. So she opens the door very, very quietly, and steals in to look at him. She bends over his pink, sleepy face, and leaves a kiss on his cheek, and I hope and believe a tear on his brow, for something twinkles there, until the child, half-aroused from his sleep, puts up his hands scarcely consciously, and wipes it away.

Then Honoria goes down stairs, and putting her bonnet and cloak in readiness on the table, sits at the window, watching. She is in a burning fever of terror and impatience. At any moment, she fears her husband may return, and then her plans will be defeated. Or the major may delay his coming until it is too late to catch the train. She gazes out into the gathering gloom, with fiercely impatient eyes.

She orders the footman to carry her large box down into the little breakfast-room opening on the hall. It will be more expeditiously removed to the cab from there. She puts on her things, though they feel so warm that she is nearly stifled. But what does that matter? She will be ready to get into the cab at once. She tries to allay her impatient restlessness by devising these little artifices for speed. And every minute she looks out of the window, and gazes up the street eagerly.

At last a cab stops at the corner. But at the same moment some one turns that corner and walks down the street. Her heart stops almost, for she is nearly sure it is her husband. But she is deceived. He passes by, and her soul is relieved.

Then she looks towards the cab, and sees the major standing beside it, making signs of haste.

She hurries down to the door. The footman is standing there, looking out of the narrow strip of window at the side.

"Charles, here's half a sovereign. Just carry my box to the cab that is waiting at the corner."

Charles looks astonished at first. Then a light seems to dawn upon him — he reflects; but the next instant says, "Yes, M'm," and carries out the trunk with great alacrity. He places it on the roof of the cab, and takes the opportunity of looking very hard at the major, who has screwed himself into as small a compass as possible in the darkest corner.

He loiters a minute, apparently from politeness, as his mistress is entering the cab, and he hears the major mention the railway station to which he wishes to be driven, to the cabman, who has got down to shut the door.

"Drive like ——" the rest is lost in the slam of the cab door; and no great loss either, I fear.

Some hours afterwards Captain Vorian comes home, and Charles, suppressing the mention of the half-sovereign, relates what has taken place.

His master is utterly aghast. He staggers as if the news were a great sledge-hammer blow on the forehead.

"Gone! Gone!" is all that he can gasp out. Presently he recovers himself a little.

"You're sure it was Major Cantlow?"

"Oh, yes, Sir, certain. I looked in at the cab window, which he'd stopped it at the corner out of the light of the gas-lamp."

"You saw his face?"

"Oh, quite plain, Sir, through the front window."

"And what the devil were you doing there?"

"I carried out the box, Sir, please. My mistress ordered me to do it."

"And you did it?"

"Yes, Sir."

Thereupon Henry Vorian gives a straight hit from the shoulder which alights just between Charles's eyes, and knocks him flat on the mat. And then the Honourable Henry Vorian turns, and leaves the deserted house, slamming the great door behind him violently. He hurries away towards town again, and hailing the first hansom that came along the road with its single lamp glaring like a Cyclops, orders the driver to take him to Mayfair. Arrived there, he hastens to his father's house, and clamours at the door, until he is admitted by a drowsy footman, who has been sitting up to smoke a furtive pipe in the kitchen, with his head up the chimney. As soon

as he obtains an entrance, Henry, without ceremony, rushes up stairs to his father and mother's room.

"May I come in?" he asks, opening the door at the same time.

"Eh, what!" asks my lord, awakening out of his first doze, while the aristocratic nose peers out, inquiringly, from a night-cap frill.

"She's gone, Sir! by Heaven, she's gone!"

"Who—where?" still asks my lord, not thoroughly conscious.

"Who? Why my wife, and with that infernal scoundrel, Cantlow."

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### HAMPTON RACES.

"WHY, James, what has put you out?" asks Marian, as she greets her affianced husband in the park, where they have arranged to meet, it being Wednesday afternoon, and a half-holiday for "teacher."

"Enough to put anyone out, darling. That fellow, Cormack, has written to my lawyer to say that circumstances over which he has no control will oblige him to put off his surrender of the estate for several months."

"But can he?"

"Just what I asked my lawyer, and he said he could. For it seems, in my anxiety to get hold of dear old Polvrehan, I closed the bargain too rapidly, and did not secure my own interests sufficiently."

"What a pity. But he may go on like this for ever—what is to prevent him?"

"Well, in the first place, he won't get his money until he delivers up possession; and in the next, I can cry off, if I choose."

"You won't do that, I know; I should be very sorry if you did. So we must wait patiently. We have waited, haven't we, dear?"

"Yes, far too long. But we will not let this fellow mar our happiness, though he puts out our plans a little."

"What can we do?"

"Charlie Crawhall, an old friend of mine, an artist, tells me



that he has seen a lovely little place to let at Hampton. It would be just the very place for us, and we could stay there and be so happy until we got possession of Polvrehan."

"Dear old Polvrehan! Well, I suppose we shall get it some day."

"To be sure. But in the meantime we can make a very happy home in our riverside villa at Hampton."

"Have you seen it?"

"No, but Crawhall is going down there to-morrow, and he has promised me a seat in his trap. If I like the place, I can take it at once—and then——"

"And then, James?" says Marian, archly.

"Then I shall make the dearest little woman in the world my wife—and 'so they married and lived happy ever afterwards,' as the old fairy tales say."

Before James and Marian parted that night, they had fixed their wedding-day, and spoke of their married life as a certainty. Is anything certain in this world?

When the evening begins to grow dark they turn their steps towards Duke Street, St. James's, where Marian's old friend Mrs. Bartlett resides now, having at last attained to the height of her ambition.

Marian had met her accidentally in the street, and learning her address went to see her. Of course she was not long with the kind-hearted little soul before she had made a full confession of her attachment for James, and of her approaching marriage.

Mrs. Bartlett, good, motherly woman, took an immense and lively interest in the engagement at once—as all good motherly women would do. She was delighted to learn that there was a difficulty about the lovers meeting, as Marian, of course, could not ask James to her lodgings, or visit him at his chambers.

"There, I declare. And if I am not the luckiest Bartlett in the world to have no one in my parlours where I sit myself now, so you can come to see me as often as ever you like—the pair of you, and dine and take your teas, and make it your home, and me your mother, my dear, which I do feel like to you—and why not? For though a boy, I have had a child of my own, and you seem to fill a place that ought to be filled in an old woman's heart, my dear." Whereupon she kisses Marian, with her eyes twinkling with tears.

Marian, you may be sure, is very grateful to the kind little body for her thoughtfulness and affection; and when she and James meet, they generally finish the evening after their walk in the park by taking tea with Mrs. Bartlett.

On this evening that merry, good-tempered woman is more than ordinarily cheerful, when she hears of James's proposal to go and take a house at Hampton and marry at once.

"Lor, it's so lovely and romantic there, where I have often gone with poor B., when living, for a holiday, and saw the pictures, and the park, which is beautiful. Why, there, I declare if I won't run down and see you sometimes; that is, if so be you make this house in Duke Street your home, my dears, when you come to town, which will, I hope, be often."

They assured her they should only be too happy to call and see her whenever they came to town. But it was getting late now, and they made preparations to go, James always seeing Marian safe home on these occasions.

"There, my dears, you mustn't go without taking a little something warm. Port wine negus—I know that's what will do you good. Don't shake your heads; you remember, I'm a regular medical myself, and never prescribe wrong. And you going out into the night air, which if it isn't cold is sure to be damp, and if it is not damp is sure to be cold, and may take hold upon your chest, and lay you both up!—and then how about Hampton?"

Having been almost compelled—at any rate prevailed upon to stop, and pay this purple libation to the Lares and Penates of Mrs. Bartlett's hospitable mansion, the lovers at last take their departure.

"Good-night, my dear," says Mrs. Bartlett to Marian, and she gives her a good hug and a kiss at the door, "good-night, my dear, and God bless you"—more kisses—"and as for you"—addressing James—"I could almost kiss you, too, if I could reach so high, for you're a downright dear, that you are; and why shouldn't I, for you are just such another as my boy might have been, if it had pleased God to spare him."

James stooped down and kissed the good woman's hand reverently. It was a hard and not very small hand, but it was one that had done many and many a good action, and never grasped money too tightly to let the poor have an alms out of its earnings.

Then James and Marian turned their faces northward, and set out arm-in-arm in the direction of the latter's lodgings. When they came to Regent Circus, there was a temporary block, and they could not cross the road for a minute or so. Cabs, omnibuses, carriages and carts were at a dead-lock, owing to a slight complication—not to say altercation—between the driver of a Waterloo 'bus and the man belonging to a van loading at the Bull and Mouth railway office.

James and Marian waited at the corner of the pavement

opposite Swan and Edgar's. A cab, with a large box on the roof, was brought to a standstill just in front of them. They were, however, too busily engaged in that absorbing conversation for which lovers are never at a loss to take any notice of the vehicle or its occupants, until a red-faced gentleman, with a grayish moustache, put his head out of the window and began to abuse the cabman.

"Curse you, why don't you drive on? You'll miss the train, you sleepy-headed idiot, and lose the money I promised you. Curse it, go on."

Marian looked up, glanced at the other occupant of the cab, and gave a start.

"What is it, dearest?" asked James, who felt her hand tighten its hold on his arm.

"That lady, in that fly. It's Miss Orr, my late employer's daughter—Mrs. Henry Vorian."

"And is that Henry Vorian?" asked James in a whisper.

"No; I don't know who it is."

"And they are going by rail. Well, it's very odd," says James, but just at this minute that *Deus ex machinâ*, a policeman, having accidentally appeared on the scene, the difficulty between omnibus and van is promptly solved, and the circulation of the traffic is resumed. The cab bearing Mrs. Vorian and the major drives on, and is forgotten by both James and Marian in their happy talk of the future.

The next day, James is up betimes, and after breakfast hastens to the place appointed for their meeting by Charles Crawhall. It is a little sporting public-house near Drury Lane, and in front of it stands a very knowing-looking gray mare, in a high dog-cart. Charlie Crawhall is standing on the pavement, flicking off imaginary flies on the door panels.

The two Latrowes, attired in the height of slangy sporting fashion, are smoking cigars and putting on dog-skin gloves of great brilliancy.

"What's the meaning of this, Charlie?" asks James, shaking him warmly by the hand, and nodding rather distantly to the Latrowes.

"Meaning? why it's Hampton Races, Jim, and I'm going to do a sketch of it for Latrowe's new paper, *The Sporting Mercury and Theatrical Advertiser*; and they are going too. So jump up—you needn't go to the races, if you don't like—we can put you down at the house, and you can join us when you choose."

James was not very well pleased at the idea, nor was he quite satisfied with Charlie's share in the business. It was evident that Crawhall had concealed the real object of his

trip, and the fact that the Latrowes were going, for fear James should decline his offer.

"There, don't look glum, Jim," said the other, hustling him out of hearing of the others; "we shall have a nice drive and a good luncheon at their expense; and you and I'll sit in front, and make the two cads jump up behind."

"But you know what scamps they are. I wonder you undertake to do anything for them; they won't pay you."

"Oh, won't they, though? You see, I've made a special study of them, and I find the poor rogues have no originality—they always cheat on the same plan. They pay—and handsomely—for the first job you do, and then try and get credit for the next and all subsequent ones. They throw a good-sized sprat this time; but I'm blessed if their salmon is such a fool as he looks. Don't they wish they may catch him?"

With these words, Charlie mounts the box, and makes James take the seat by his side. The two Latrowes scramble up behind, and try to sit as if they were very comfortable, and greatly in the habit of riding through life in dog-carts. They wear light coats, white hats, fancy waistcoats, white neck-cloths, with horse-shoe pins, tight cord trousers, and highly polished boots. They carry canes, and suck at very large and rather rank cigars, and swear profusely, which they consider is gentlemanly, and calculated to impress the world at large with their importance.

The dog-cart sets off, amid a small cheer volunteered by two crossing sweepers, a newspaper boy, and a shoeblack—the latter probably joining in out of purely professional admiration of the polish on the boots occupying the back seat.

There is no need to describe the road to Hampton, or to tell you how delightful a drive it is to that pleasant little village on the banks of the Thames. On this occasion, James Trefusis was not particularly struck with it, for the road was crowded with vehicles of all sorts, sizes, shapes, and descriptions, their occupants being very noisy, obstreperous, and much addicted to personality and practical jokes of a rough character. All the lowest and worst features of the Epsom road on Derby Day were here vulgarly caricatured and exaggerated.

Gaudily dressed women lolled impudently in carriages driven by flagrant gents. Costermongers, prize-fighters and the most degraded specimens of the degraded race of betting sharpers were thick as thieves—and there was plenty of *them*!

It was a dull day, with a promise of the recurrence of the heavy showers which had fallen in the night. But the pinch-beck swells who adorned the festivity clung to their blue and green veils, and wore dust-coats to keep the mud off. The

whole affair was to the Derby what Seven Dials is to Piccadilly.

James was not at all sorry when Charlie pulled up and directed him to the house he was in search of, situated a short distance down a lane turning out of the main road.

"You'll find us easy enough when you want. We won't lunch till you come; but don't stop too long, or I won't be sure that the hot weather won't open some of the champagne," shouted Charlie.

James was some little time before he could obtain admission to the house when he found it, for the man who had the care of it had started off to see the races, but was luckily overtaken, and brought back by a boy from a neighbouring cottage, whom James sent to find him.

The house was a pleasant place enough, with a view along the river, and a nice large garden. The rent was not exorbitant, and the whole was in capital repair.

James was so satisfied with it that he was prepared to close the bargain at once; but the man told him that he could not make any arrangement. Persons desirous of taking the house must communicate with Messrs. Pugh and Praysham, auctioneers, agents, and appraisers, of Hugh Street, Knightsbridge.

It had been James's intention to spend as much of his time as possible in inspecting the premises, for he did not care to be present at the orgies which are the chief feature of the Hampton Races. But his cicerone was so evidently on thorns to get away, and had so plainly set his heart upon seeing the fun of the course, that James could not, as a question of humanity towards a suffering fellow-creature, detain him longer than he could help.

So, when the released servitor had departed like a shot from a gun, James found that there was nothing left but to follow him at leisure.

He had reached the course, and had already sighted Charlie Crawhill's dog-cart, when an incident occurred which drove him away from the scene in horror.

I have already said that these races are a disgraceful and disreputable saturnalia, indulged in by the lowest only, and shunned by respectable people. The greatest license reigns, and the fun is of the sort which is thought very fine at an inferior country fair.

As James was walking along, some one, coming quietly behind him, drew across his shoulder one of those common toys that make a noise like the tearing of a coat. He turned round with a start; the joke was successful, and considered so

exquisitely humorous by those who saw it, that loud and prolonged laughter followed it. The performer of the trick was a flashily-dressed young man, who had a young girl upon his arm. James was about to speak angrily to the man, when his eye caught the face of the girl, who at the same moment recognised him.

"Good God! what are you doing here? What is the meaning of this?" James asked hoarsely, stretching forward and catching the girl by the arm.

It was Alice!

There—in such company—in that tawdry finery, with that blurred and blotted beauty, a face where the grace of innocence was wanting, and eyes that had no shame in them—it was impossible for her to seem anything else to James than what she really was. She cowered in terror, clinging to the arm of her companion, who stood a little bewildered before James's evident distress and horror.

"Oh, take me away! let me go!" she cried out. But James held her by the wrist.

"Tell me I am mistaken—tell me I am mad!" he hissed out. "But no! It is only too true—wretched, miserable girl—unhappy creature—poor, unhappy, wronged Alice."

"Let me go—take me away!" was all she could moan.

"No, come with me!" said James, trying to lead her away; "come to your sister Marian, who is so longing to see you!"

At the mention of Marian's name Alice shuddered, and with a sudden effort escaped from his grasp. Slipping behind her companion, she cried, "Keep him off! Don't let him take me!"

"Come, leave the girl alone!" said the man.

"Aye, leave the girl alone! What are you after? Go along!" came menacingly from the crowd which had gathered round.

"Stand back," said James sternly, "out of the way, fool! I will take her away from this cursed place."

"Go it, Jack, we'll stand by you!" said the friends of the little gent, pushing up to him, and placing themselves between James and Alice.

"Will you stand aside? Now or never! For by Heaven I'll knock you down," said James savagely.

The little gent, backed up by his friends, refused to move. Alice shrieked, imploring them not to touch James. But the crowd was a ruffianly crowd, and wanted to see a row.

And they did see it. For James Trefusis's left darted out, and down went the little gent. The next minute half a dozen had sprung at once on the young Cornishman. He had the

knack of wrestling as well as fighting though, and several of them promptly measured their length on the sward. But numbers will overpower a giant, and it was lucky for James, who stood like a lion at bay, with half a dozen curs clinging to him, that the police came up and put a stop to the fray.

He explained to the sergeant the cause of the fight, and begged his assistance in rescuing Alice. But she had disappeared; and though James searched everywhere on the course, he failed to find any trace of her.

He returned to town sad and dispirited — almost heart-broken to think that it was his fate to tell the woman he loved what shame had come to her sister.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

### THE CAPTURE OF CRESUS.

MR. CHARLES FINK is one of the industrious classes. He is active and intelligent, and not altogether unpossessed of the advantages and experiences which can only be procured by foreign travel. He has seen the kangaroo bounding over his native plains, and has had opportunities of studying the floral beauties of a land so luxuriant in respect of them that the particular inlet where he sojourned had been actually called Botany Bay.

I regret to say that Mr. Charles Fink was not a wealthy man. His travelling expenses had been subscribed by the tax-paying community, on that splendid principle of legislation which enacts that if A robs B of a pocket handkerchief or purse, B, together with C, D, and other unoffending persons, shall club together to keep A in every luxury for a certain period, which shall be longer or shorter in proportion as the sum which B originally lost shall have been larger or smaller.

So, despite his having made the grand tour, and notwithstanding his having been educated and brought up at public expense, Mr. Charles Fink, *alias* Charley Fink, *alias* Flash Charles, *alias* the Cly-faker, *alias* the Yokel — all distinguished people are known to an admiring public by a *sobriquet* or antiphrasis of endearment — was by no means a prosperous individual.

To speak the plain truth, he was as miserable a vagabond as ever skulked on this earth, and lived just such a hand to

mouth wretched life as the veriest cur that lurks about a butcher's market on the chance of offal. He was, to say it out at once, a thief.

Now a thief, in spite of that romantic life of "Jack Sheppard," and the shoal of cheap (and nasty—and what is more, inferior) imitations of it now published in weekly numbers for the edification of the youthful mind, is anything but a hero and a jolly dog. He works hard—very hard in a feverish, unwholesome way—at his precarious avocation, and no man earns,—as a mere abstract equivalent of money for labour, apart from considerations of *meum* and *tuum*,—so little by his labour. He is known and noted by the police—a body possessed of just sufficient intelligence to enable them to keep their eye on a man when he is down. And I know nothing that more clearly points out the abject state of the thief than the dull, unresisting way in which he submits to capture, which a little cunning, a little spirit, or even a little capital, might enable him to avoid. He skulks about by dusk and daylight, lives in dens where only the poorest of the poor live, and is pursued by constant terror, which prevents him from enjoying his pitiful plunder whenever he is fortunate enough to get a haul. I speak of the thief, it must be remembered. The skilled burglar is just a step above him ; but even his life is far from being enviable.

But it is time I should close this little essay upon "Rascality considered as a Profession," and resume my story.

Mr. Charles Fink having become dimly conscious by a sort of brute instinct—for he has never had the luck to be called on to pay his rent quarterly—that this is the morning of Lady Day, has betaken himself in the direction of Lombard Street, where he intends to exercise his calling as opportunity may offer. He has been called "The Yokel," not because he can assume the appearance of a countryman, but because he happens to look like one—and I think this very unflattering reason will be found to hold good for all thieves' nicknames. So on this morning he loiters in Lombard Street as if he were a country cousin come to cash a cheque.

But he has not so lounged for a quarter of an hour, during which period nothing more lucrative than a bandanna falls in his way, when he happens to cast his eye up Babel Court, and espy a short man and a tall man who are taking the air in that cheerful *cul de sac*.

Mr. Fink's air changes in a minute. His apathy gives place to activity, and he hurries away from the neighbourhood as if he had suddenly recollected an appointment, and was ten minutes late already.



He only pauses once near a bank which is doing a brisk stroke of business, and he pauses there, not to exercise his calling, but to whisper to a widow lady, who is apparently in this quarter on business connected with the dividends.

"Bet, there's Bunce and Dodgett on the walk. Hook it!" says Mr. Charles Fink; and the respectable widow immediately hails a passing omnibus, and insists on being taken to Camden town. I regret to believe that two ladies in that omnibus found subsequently that their pockets had been picked, —and the respectable widow lady was not one of them.

Bunce and Dodgett are members of the detective Police Force, and they were by no means concerning themselves about the doings of Flash Charles and Bet, the Brummagem Widow. Those worthies might have robbed a director of the Bank of England under their very noses and escaped; for you could hardly expect the police mind to be capable of thinking of two things at once; and they had one very serious and important matter already in hand.

But Charles Fink and Elizabeth the Relict having even a lower order of intelligence than Bunce and Dodgett, were kept in awe by those officers. You need not set a thief to catch a thief in these matters. You only want one fool to look after a bigger fool.

Charles and Elizabeth then depart on their way, and Bunce and Dodgett still maintain their outward air of mystery, and perambulate Babel Court. The two former only appear for so brief a space on the stage that I may be pardoned for saying that I am sorry they were not aware of the preoccupation of the two latter, for then they might have found some work to do, poor creatures, and I might have found a further contribution to my essay "On Rascality considered as a Profession."

Whether any casual passenger up Ludgate Hill at about midday on the Lady Day I speak of observed the Cathedral of St. Paul's oscillate, or whether any traveller bound to London Bridge saw the Monument on Fish Street Hill trembling to its base, I cannot confidently assert; but there was an earthquake in the City on that day.

Pale men 'upon 'Change' whispered to others, "Have you heard?" "No; what?" "About old Orr?" "No. Nothing bad, eh?" "Rather!" "What, gone?" "I believe you!" "How much?" "Not known." "You don't say so?" "A fact, Sir. Had it from Smith, who was there when they suspended." "By Jove!"

So the news spreads in a whisper. The weather is a topic for once entirely neglected. Mr. Orr's name is in everybody's mouth.

Yes! The clay feet of the golden idol have crumbled to their native dust, and the huge image lies prone. And at such a fall well might St. Paul's Cathedral have shaken and the Monument trembled.

Just as you have seen the fall of a high wall, or a bridge or any other such huge structure of masonry, so was the fall of Mr. Orr. First comes the great crash; and then, before the dust has cleared off, smaller portions give way and drop into the general ruin. Within two or three hours of Mr. Orr's suspension, other houses had closed their doors, and the panic was spreading. The City, looked at from a certain point of view, is only a row of card houses. Touch one, and the chances are that half of the rest will tumble down with it. It is a very humiliating picture of that great centre of wealth and commerce, but it is a terribly true one. I think City men must walk about holding their breath for fear of bringing the frail structure about their ears.

By about two or three o'clock, the whisper that runs through 'Change assumes a more awkward form. "I say, have you heard the last?" "What, about Orr's failure?" "More than that." "Nonsense! I haven't heard it then." "He's been arrested for forgery!"

Whereupon the informed gave such a whistle as some of my readers, I fancy, are indulging in mentally.

Men shook their heads and looked grave at this; and some, I do not doubt, felt exceedingly unwell, for they possibly had skeletons in their strong boxes, and shook to think how slight a touch might reveal the secret, and place them in the same position as Mr. Orr. At which thought I dare say they got so angry with the man whose detection had suggested it, that they went away and told their friends what a pity it was that they did not hang for forgery now!

Mr. Orr's suspension was a work of small time. The order to stop payment was issued. The porter closed the door, the clerks put on their hats and departed; and Mr. Orr and his cashier, with one or two old and trusted servants who stood by him instinctively rather than from any sense of personal loyalty, were left to stare one another in the face rather blankly in his dim inner sanctum, where, it being a darkish day, the gas was burning with a sickly look, as if it were rather afraid the company would only get twopence in the pound—which, by-the-way, was a good deal more than they deserved for the article they supplied.

At various periods of this day—and for many days previous—Mr. Orr had peered nervously over his wire blind into the narrow alley, wherein a tall man and a short man had of late

taken to disporting themselves. He has on one occasion had the policeman on that beat called into his sanctum, and has ordered him to keep his eye on these two men as suspicious characters, who have been lurking about for some days, evidently for no good purpose. The constable, with a stupid grin, agrees as to their object, and promises to have them under surveillance. But Mr. Orr, peeping furtively through the blind after his departure, sees him speaking on the most friendly terms to the ill-assorted pair of watchers. They thrust their tongues into their cheeks, and shake with inward mirth.

On this particular afternoon, soon after the suspension of payment is announced, a military-looking man, in a tight blue frock—an inspector of police, in short—appears at the entrance of Babel Court, in company with a thin, dry, parchmenty-looking gentleman, who gives you the impression that he is a Darwin development of a weasel or a ferret, and who carries a blue bag, bulgy with papers. The inspector, having attracted the attention of Bunce and Dodgett, goes through the pantomime of taking the developed weasel into custody (much to that acute individual's delight), and then indicates Mr. Orr's premises with a jerk of his thumb. Bunce and Dodgett nod and grin likewise. It seems to be an excruciatingly good joke.

When Mr. Orr has examined the books, and had a talk with the cashier, and written a few letters, he reaches down his hat from its peg, takes a furtive glance over the blind, and makes for the door. He opens it hurriedly, and goes out as if he meant to run out of Babel Court. But he sees Bunce and Dodgett standing in the entry, and pauses. Then he walks deliberately towards them, and they come forward to meet him.

The cashier, who had attended his employer to the door, sees this—sees the men accost Mr. Orr, and sees Mr. Orr stop. He thinks they are about to arrest the played-out capitalist for debt; he might be arrested now, for he has accepted the Chiltern Hundreds a week since. The cashier, worthy man, thinks it would be too painful for Mr. Orr to be arrested in this way; he himself has means, and will pay him out; so he hastens forward. He comes up to the group just in time to hear something about "forgery" spoken by the taller. Mr. Orr bows his head. There is something so shame-stricken and guilty in the action that the cashier turns back into the bank.

There is no yellow chariot waiting at the end of Babel Court to carry the great man back to Grosvenor Place. A common cab is hailed; they have not far to go, but it is an

act of mercy to the prisoner. One policeman rides on the box ; the other takes the front seat opposite Mr. Orr, and they drive off, the policeman on the beat grinning widely, and waving an adieu to Bunce and Dodgett. It is an act of taste and delicacy ; but those are qualities for which the force is famed.

In a short time the ex-capitalist finds himself in no more cheering or comfortable a spot than a police-cell. He sinks down on his pallet, and begins to reflect for the first time calmly on what has happened, is happening, and will happen. In the last few days the fever has been too fierce, and he has not been able to think. Now that is all over, and he is collected.

He muses on the home once so grand and well-frequented, now tumbled in ruin around him.

But there are other homes which he has devastated. Not homes that were so seeming happy and prosperous as his, but which yet were far more contented and glad. At that moment, when he was sitting in his solitary cell, his name was on many lips—and it was uttered in bitterness, in anger—aye, with curses. And no wonder ! How many had been misled by his sanctimonious hypocrisy into placing unbounded confidence in his integrity, and how many were now purchasing with the whole of their worldly riches the terrible experience that outward piety is a mere cloak for iniquity ! They might have bought the knowledge cheaper, if I had only found time to print and publish—and of course primarily to write—that essay on “Rascality considered as a Profession.” For in that work, although some considerable portion will be devoted to the consideration of such poor scamps as Charley Fink, I feel sure the greater number of chapters will have to be given up to the big rogues—the Forger, who goes to church regularly twice every Sunday—the Robber of widows and orphans, whose name appears in all the subscription lists of charities—the Dishonest Steward, who gives (other people’s) coals and blankets to the poor at Christmas—with a host of such other large varieties of the tribe *Raptores*.

Where is Mrs. Orr ?

She has been laid up ever since the day when Captain Henry Vorian, bursting into the room, suddenly announced the flight of her daughter, his wife, and then launched into a bitter diatribe against Mr. Orr and his better half for selling their child to him at the altar ; with much more inconsequential raving, which might have been partially true, but did not come with a good grace from the other party in an infamous bargain.

Mr. Orr had borne the blow of Honoria’s flight far better

than we might have expected until we learnt what has taken place now. A man who is about to submit to utter ruin and disgrace, who has the workhouse and a prison staring him in the face for his family and himself, can hardly be very sensitive about such minor details.

Mrs. Orr, I say, has not been well since she heard of her daughter's elopement. She was a mother in spite of all the hardening influences of money; and when she sat and sobbed over the girl's fate in her poor, common, vulgar way, she was a woman, instead of a doll stuffed with bank-notes, and stuck with diamonds.

But with Mr. Orr, when, as in duty bound, he confessed his embarrassments to her—and even revealed some portion of the forgery peccadillo—she was as hard and money-loving as it had been the labour of his life to make her.

"She would have nothing to do with him. She had money of her own settled on her, and she washed her hands of him. How dare he disgrace her in this way? What did he mean by dragging her down like this?"

You would have supposed, to hear her, that she had brought him a large fortune and a distinguished name.

So Mr. Orr is deserted and solitary. The only friend he has is a lawyer, who comes to undertake the management of his defence. Lawyers are a much-abused body, and no one ever says a good word for them; and yet no man falls so low but that a lawyer will come to him and try and console him. When all the rest of the world had abandoned Mr. Orr, lo! here comes a lawyer to befriend him. In the debtor's room, in the murderer's cell, in the forger's cage, we find the lawyer always present. Why should we speak ill of a class so kindly, so beneficent, so unflinching? Why should we aim all our petty shafts of satire, all our small sneers and unchristian jokes, at a body of men who will not scruple to visit the most criminal among us, in the most miserable dungeon, and who will strain every nerve, and employ every artifice, to clear the guilty wretch or mitigate his punishment—for a consideration?

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## MARIAN TAKES UP HER QUEST.

THERE comes a hum of busy voices from the open door of Marian's school. For the children are deeply engaged in their lessons, conning them off with all their hearts, because Teacher will shortly call them up to say what they speak of as their "jography."

It is a neat and clean little school-room this school-room of St. Pacifica's, and is pleasantly situated. It has a good-sized gravel yard behind, surrounded by back gardens belonging to the class of people who combine utility with elegance, and grow scarlet-runners and wallflowers. They also wash at home; and the display of linen, if clean, is coarse, and occasionally dilapidated. The gentlemen connected with the gardens frequently sit in them in their shirt sleeves of an afternoon, and smoke long clay pipes with a fixed idleness—gazing hard at some particular brick, or stump, or plant, and thinking of nothing at all. The ladies clink about on pattens, festoon their dab-washes, and stimulate the infants who are not at school into long howls, produced by the smart application of a soap-suddy palm to the cheek in the region of the eye, which generally comes in for a touch of the saponaceous that makes it tingle and weep. Cats are prevalent on the garden walls, and these form the sole distraction which can lure the male inhabitants from the fixed idleness I have mentioned. For those gentlemen generally possess a dog, more or less mongrel in breed, which they set at the cat; and its disappointed yelpings, as pussy glides off far above its reach, wake all the neighbouring curs to clamour.

The *locale* is, in short, a struggling, respectable, hard-working suburb. There is something very like real fresh air blowing in at the windows from over the garden space, and it brings the odour of wallflowers and the smell of beans in bloom very often. There is beside the gravel yard a field hard by, where building operations have been begun and suspended. Here the children play; and here, in the pools of stagnant water, collected where foundations have been dug, they catch sticklebacks with a worm and a bit of cotton; and sometimes, I regret to say, bring them into school in furtive pickle-bottles.

The neighbourhood is so quiet and out-of-the-way, in fact, that the appearance of a hansom there brings out half the inhabitants to their doors. The gentlemen lay down their pipes, take a last look at the object of their fixed contemplation, as if with a view to its identification on their return, and then come out to the doorway and stare. The small children, too small to go to school, scramble out into the road, at the imminent risk of being killed—either as if they did not know the nature of hansom cabs, and thought they could not run over people, or else in order to achieve fame by offering themselves as sacrifices to the first cab that had ever penetrated to that region. The ladies, who come clattering forth to inspect the phenomenon, are so absorbed in contemplation of it that they do not notice the peril of their offspring.

It is a yellow hansom, with a gray horse. Now a yellow hansom is a conspicuous and beautiful object at any time or in any place—I must confess that until quite recently, when age had matured judgment, I never could see a yellow hansom without feeling a devouring passion to ride in it—so that, apart from its novelty, there was some ground for the sensation which the cab was creating. The sensations of the passenger in that vehicle, however, I should presume were anything but pleasant. The road was in a fearful state. Large horses, dragging heavy loads of bricks, had poached it into deep ruts and holes, and the mud had dried into a sort of rugged rock now, so that the gray horse stumbled and plunged fearfully, and the yellow hansom rocked and oscillated to the verge of an overturn. First one wheel went into the rut, then the other; then they both went with a jerk and a bound over the barrier of an intersecting rut. And a hansom is just the last sort of vehicle one would select for a rough journey, on account of its lowness. Bump, bang, roll, shudder, thump, bang! No wonder the gray horse shook his head, as much as to say, "Poor fellow, I know he must be mad, or he would never come along here!"

Meanwhile cabby, so far from being crazy, was quite sane enough to feel he had better abandon the affectation of a universal knowledge of locality, of which, as a rule, a London hansom cabby would sooner die than confess an ignorance. He was completely strange to these parts, and did not hesitate to admit it. So he kept asking the people he passed to direct him to some place which sounded very like "Sam Spiffiker's."

The natives wondered, but could not help him. They did not know anyone of the name of Samuel Spiffiker anywhere thereabouts. At last the occupant of the hansom enlarges the inquiry by asking about "schools." They know the schools, but there's no one of the name of Spiffiker there. "Teacher's

name's Carlyle," says one small urchin, who has had a week's schooling once.

James Trefusis—for it is he who is driving down into this strange region—immediately offers to give the youngster sixpence and a ride in the hansom, if he will act as guide to the schools.

James has frequently convoyed Marian to her lodgings, which are some little way from the school, so that his ignorance is excusable. He had never been there, and until now never had any reason to go. What is the reason now?

The reason is that all night long he has been haunted by Alice's face. He has heard the clocks chime round from midnight till early dawn—and then has fallen into a feverish sleep, troubled with dreams in which Alice's face has appeared and reappeared, like the face of a corpse carried down some rapid and turbulent stream. He made up his mind at last to go straight to Marian, and tell her what he saw at Hampton—and he meant to go early, and catch her at her lodgings ere she had left for school. But towards morning he falls into something like sound and refreshing slumber, and when he wakes it is too late to find her at home. So he determines to drive to St. Pacifica's Schools, because having once made up his mind that she is to be told, he feels he shall never rest until she knows all.

So, after much circuitous driving and a great deal of direful jolting, thanks to the urchin who gives his instructions to James, who, in turn, conveys them to the driver through the trap in the roof, the cab is at last safely piloted to the school-house.

"Run in doors, and tell teacher a gentleman wants to see her particularly."

The boy does as he is told, receives his sixpence, and goes away smiling and much envied—not only as the possessor of a silver coin of the realm, but also on account of his having ridden in a hansom.

Marian guesses who her visitor is, and sends word that he can walk up. She herself stands smiling at the head of the stairs; for she supposes that James has come to tell her that he has secured the house at Hampton, or some such pleasant news. But she sees the cloud on his face, and hers darkens immediately.

"What is it, James? Ill news?"

"Sore news, my darling. Make your heart strong to bear it, for it has nearly broken mine to learn it."

"What is it about, James? About you?"

"No, my child. But about some one very dear to us both."



"Alice!" gasps Marian, and sinks down into her seat. They have walked up the school-room to her post. James leans over the desk before her.

"Tell me what you know, James!" she says, imploringly, as soon as the first stupor of dread passes off.

And then James Trefusis told her all that had happened at the races at Hampton the day before. But before he does so Marian dismisses the children, who get an hour's holiday, and are quite delighted at it, little knowing how sad the reason of their release is.

When she had heard the story with breathless impatience, she sinks her head upon her hands, and continues for a time weeping and praying silently. She remains awhile lost in thought. Then she gets up and comes round the desk to take James by both hands. She looks him long and mournfully in the face.

"Oh, James, it will break my heart! it will break my heart!"

Then she falls on his bosom, and weeps wildly and bitterly for a time, and he does not know how to comfort her. She can only repeat, "It will break my heart! It will break my heart!"

By-and-by this paroxysm of grief passes, and she grows calmer.

"Let me sit down and think, James. Ah, my poor, poor child, my bright darling! What shall I do?" And once more her fortitude gives way, and she wrings her hands, and moans and weeps.

Then she springs up—"I must go and find her. I must go at once."

"Wait awhile, darling, be quiet awhile, and you shall go," says James, gently detaining her.

She sits down again. She is very docile—the truth being that for about half an hour the shock is too powerful for her brain, and she does not quite know what she is saying or doing.

At last, however, she recovers herself. She has wept all she may now, for it is time to decide what she shall do. She is again lost in thought. James has walked away, not to distress her by watching her sorrow. He is pretending to look out of the window.

"James," she says, softly, coming up to him after a time, and laying her hand on his arm.

"My own one," he says, turning to her, and offering to clasp her to his heart—but she will not let him.

"You believe I love you?" she asks.

"I know it."

"Yet we must part, James."

"Good Heavens, what is the meaning of this? Has not our one parting been sufficiently bitter?"

"It must be, James. I cannot and will not let you suffer. With this shame come on me, I can be no man's wife."

"Shame on *you*, darling? What has this to do with you? We both mourn for a sister who is dead. But it is no shame to us."

"You may think so, but others will. No! My purpose is fixed. I cannot be your wife now."

"Do you wish to drive me mad?"

"Oh, darling, darling, only love. Cannot you see it breaks my heart to say this? Cannot you love still as you would if I were dead? For I must be dead to you and to myself, to everything save the trust my dead father left me."

"Oh, Marian, I have toiled and waited so long. I have lost you and found you again. I have suffered sorely. Can you leave me thus?"

"Darling, James, it is my love for you that makes me see how impossible it is that your wife should bring a disgrace like this as a wedding dower."

"Oh, Marian, Marian, will you not learn that I care for nothing in the world but you—that without you the world is hateful to me? Be my wife."

"I dare not, James. I must go and find my poor lamb. I will live on bread and water, and go clad in rags, but I will find her. I must find her—I shall find her at last, for I'll never cease searching this great city night and day."

"Be my wife, and we will search together."

"No, James. I must go on my mission—I must do my duty—alone. I will find her, or just lie down and die, when I've searched all I can, and yet seen no trace of her."

"But when you find her, Marian—will you come back to me, and be my wife then?"

"Will you let me, after all I shall have had to pass through? Will you let me, with her with me? No, you *must* not. I know you, James, and I feel sure you would, but it must not be."

"But I may see you?"

"Oh, James, it would unnerve me for the work. But I'll write to you."

"And this is your firm and unalterable resolve?"

"Yes, James, my own love. Don't break my heart with struggling against it. Suffer it for my sake—for your sake—for hers."

"God help me—and bless you!"

"Good-bye, my own, own love." She sprang to his arms, clung round his neck, and kissed him.

"Good-bye, darling of my heart!"

And so, striving to find in poor words an expression of what they felt, they took leave of each other.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

### HOW THE LACQUOIGNES BEAR IT.

I do not envy the Honourable Henry Vorian his house in Kensington after the departure of his wife. They had quarrelled it is true, and avoided one another, while she was with him. But now the utter silence of the house—for the servants crept about it silently like scared ghosts, or wild creatures before a storm—the unbroken and awful stillness seemed as though death had set up his habitation there.

But the silence was more terrible than that which death brings to a household. It was the silence of dishonour.

Even the nursery was deserted. For as soon as the flight of Honoria was reported at the house in Grosvenor Place, Mrs. Orr ordered out the yellow chariot, drove to Kensington, and carried off both child and nurse. I do not know by what right she did this, but she was accustomed to command, and happening to arrive during Henry's absence, she gave her orders with such calm consciousness of strength that no one ventured to oppose them—not even Charles, though his eye was still adorned with an Iris that should have held out to him an ominous promise of what was likely to happen if he were an unresisting spectator of more elopements from his master's house.

But Henry was not at all disposed to quarrel with Mrs. Orr for carrying off the child, or with Charles for permitting her to do so. He was only too glad to be relieved of the encumbrance. Besides, the child was too like its mother to be pleasant company. Nevertheless, the absence even of his fretful wails made the silence of the house more deep.

Nobody came near Henry. People did not quite know how far the story was true, or did not know what course to adopt if it were true—or didn't trouble their heads about it at all any further than to say that they had always thought that Vorian and his wife lived unhappily—that he was a brute and *she* was a vixen, and both were equally to blame.

As for my lord and my lady, they were so utterly disgusted at the result of their son's alliance with the daughter of a person of obscure birth, that they retired forthwith to Beaudechet.

It was quite curious to observe how treacherous were their noble memories. They were both under the impression that they had "always been opposed to the match—but poor Henry was so infatuated. They had felt it was a *mésalliance*, and did not like to see a member of their ancient house marrying into the family of a mere wealthy *parvenu*." I believe if it had been possible for the aristocratic nose to turn up, it would have curled with a double hitch, as sailors say, at the mention of Mr. Orr's name. But unbending fate and an inflexible cartilage forbad such a protest.

Although the relations of Henry to his noble parents had never been very warm and cordial, he certainly missed them now. He wandered about the echoing rooms of his deserted home with a wild, restless pacing like that of a caged wild beast. He had no one to consult or talk to; for he was ashamed to tell his story to his legal adviser, except by letter.

There was nothing to be done. There were no active steps to be adopted, or he might have found relief in energy. But his wife had written a very cold formal letter from the continent, admitting her fault, and declaring her intention of never returning to England. So that Henry had not even the ghastly employment of accumulating proofs of his own dishonour.

At length it occurred to Henry to write to an old brother officer, and ask him to come and advise him. Accordingly, in the course of the next day or so, Colonel Armytage called upon him.

"My dear Vorian, I am most grieved for you. Distressed beyond measure, I assure you. Could hardly believe my ears when I heard of it. What can I do for you?"

"What ought I to do, Armytage? Curse the woman, I don't care about her. She may go to the deuce if she likes. He's heartily welcome to her, and a pretty life she'll lead him as a penalty. But you see, my honour, Jack—my honour. What am I to do?"

"Well, if you want my opinion, I think you must shoot him. Do—upon my soul. Can't see any other way out of it."

"There's nothing I should like better, but in these days—"

"Why, you're not in the army now. They can't come down upon you for duelling against the regulations."

"But the general opinion is so strong against it, Jack. I'm not afraid, you know—for I'm a good shot, and should dearly

like to shoot the dog. But then, nowadays, one's tried for murder for these things, and I'll be hanged if I should like to be hanged for such a woman."

"Where are they? Not in England, I suppose?"

"No, on the continent."

"The very thing—follow them there, and call him out. Nobody takes any notice of duels abroad."

"By Jove! the very thing. Egad, I'll start to-morrow."

"By-the-way, old fellow—you'll pardon me—but who is the man? There are so many rumours."

"That blackguard Cantlow."

"What! Major Cantlow?"

"That's the man."

"Then, my dear fellow, you may save yourself the trouble and expense of a trip to the continent."

"Why? What do you mean?"

"Mean! That he won't fight. The fellow's a cur, and will not face you. You're not the first man who would like to get satisfaction out of Cantlow—but you will not be the last, either, if that's any consolation."

"But he can't refuse."

"Won't he, though? You don't know Cantlow. But that is evident, or you would not have admitted him as a visitor. He's a regular black sheep,—and as cowardly. How did you come to meet him?"

"At the Orrs'."

"That comes of mixing in that sort of society. I beg your pardon, though, old fellow, I forgot they are connections——"

"Not now, Jack; so abuse them to your heart's content, and I'll be chorus."

"Can't see that it would do us any good. Wish you could get a chance of shooting him, though. But you won't. Know him too well to expect that. Beggar was kicked out of the Rag ages ago for card-sharping."

"The deuce he was."

"Yes. And what's more, some of the pigeons he had been plucking wanted him to go out, but he laughed at them."

"Then I suppose it is no use following him. But, by George, if I ever meet him, I'll break every bone in his sneaking carcass."

"I'll tell you what I'd do, Vo., if I were you. I'd shut up the house——"

"I mean to sell it."

"Very well, then, sell it, or hand it over to your agents to sell for you, and go down into the country. Your people are at Beauchet, are they not?"

"Yes, confound 'em."

"Well, go down there till this has a little blown over."

"By Jove, Jack Armytage, why didn't I think of that? It is just the thing, for if I stop here much longer all alone in the infernal echoing, empty house, I shall go crazy."

Accordingly the next day found Henry Vorian and his luggage on the platform of the railway, waiting for the train to start. He had handed over possession of his house to Scrooby, and instructed him at the same time to take the necessary steps to procure a divorce.

It was evening, and the station was crowded with Government clerks and City men, all bound for their suburban and semi-rustic residences. There was a great scuttling to and fro of porters, ringing of bells, steam-whistling, and such cheerful sounds as seem to be inseparable from railway travelling—to wit the loud successive banging of all the carriage-doors—the rattle and click of the axle-box lids, as the man with the box of pine-apple ice inspected them each in turn—the clang of wheels as the unseen inspector, crawling beneath the carriages, sounded them all, one after the other, with a hammer.

Then there were the shrieks and complaints of elderly females, who were under the impression that this was or was not their train, and did not believe their luggage was right, and wanted to know how soon they would reach their destination, with a thousand other shrill queries or querelæ.

Henry Vorian did not, however, object to the noise and bustle; it diverted him.

"Paper! *Ev'n Sta'd'd*, sec' deesh'n. *Star*, or *Sta'd'd*, Paper!"

The boy came yelling past where Henry was standing. He carried a bill of the contents of one of the papers, and Henry, almost without thinking, read it. It ran thus:—

## **Evening Standard,**

*June 26th.*

ALARMING CONFLAGRATION AT WAPPING.

LATEST INTELLIGENCE FROM PARIS.

ATTEMPTED MURDER AND SUICIDE AT GLASGOW.

SHOCKING MURDER AT RIPON.

ROBBERY AT LEEDS: CAPTURE OF THE BURGLARS.

FAILURE OF ORR'S BANK.

OUTBREAK IN THE SOUTH OF ITALY.

The Honourable Henry Vorian was naturally not much interested in the fire at Wapping. He did not know where that place was, or anything about it; and he certainly had no property there. The latest intelligence from Paris, as it was not likely to mention "the arrival of Major Cantlow and the Honourable Mrs. Vorian at the Hotel du Louvre," did not greatly interest him. He thought little about the attempted murder and suicide at Glasgow—unless, indeed, he made a passing conjecture that it might be a husband attempting to kill a faithless wife—nor was he deeply concerned about the murder at Ripon or the robbery at Leeds.

But when he came to the "Failure of Orr's Bank," he was taken considerably aback. He could hardly believe his eyes.

"Here, stop. Give me an *Evening Standard*," he gasped.

"*Sta'd'd*, Sir? Yes, Sir," said the boy giving him the paper, and pocketing the coin Henry gave him, with equal promptitude.

Henry at once took his place in the train, settling himself down in a corner, and proceeded to hunt for the paragraph about Orr's Bank.

With a trembling hand he cut the pages with his ticket, and at last discovered and read the brief announcement that "At an early hour this morning the doors of Mr. Orr's Bank in Babel Court, Lombard Street, were closed, and a notice posted up to the effect that it was compelled to suspend payment."

Henry Vorian put down his paper, and became lost in thought of anything but the most agreeable kind.

In the meantime three or four passengers entered the compartment where he was sitting and took their seats, and in a few minutes the train was in motion.

The new-comers were regular daily travellers by the line, living out of town, and coming to business by rail every morning and returning every evening. They were therefore acquainted with one another, and soon fell into a conversation, which presently turned upon a topic that made Henry Vorian prick up his ears.

"Deuce of a thing this smash of Orr's," said Mr. Badger, a spruce, dapper City man.

"Yes; very heavy, isn't it?" asked Mr. Moorsom, a government clerk.

"Extent not known yet; but I'm afraid there'll be a whole lot of poor people ruined. He did a thundering big trade, you know. People had great confidence in him, he was so religious."

"Blessed old humbug! What's the cause of the smash—have you any idea?"

"None in the world. He had no business to break with such a large trade."

"Oh, you know," here broke in Mr. Lardie D'Ardour, who was a swell in the Treasury; "Oh, you know, they say his son-in-law, Vorian, future Lord Lacquoigne, let him in heavily."

"Ah, that's the fellow whose wife ran away from him," said the City man.

"Yes; they say he treated her brutally," said D'Ardour. "She ran away with some officer in his old regiment."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Well, old Orr will survive the smash, I suppose," resumed Mr. Moorsom after a pause, during which the train had stopped at a station and taken in one or two additional passengers.

"You were speaking of Mr. Orr, of Orr's Bank, I presume?" said one of the new-comers.

"Yes," said Moorsom rather curtly, and with some hauteur, for he did not quite like being addressed by a perfect stranger—no Englishman ever does.

"Then I suppose you haven't heard the latest news?"

"Nothing later than the stoppage. Is there anything else than what's in the *Standard*?" broke in Mr. Badger.

"Oh, yes. In the latest edition I suppose it will be; but I heard it from a friend, who was transacting business with the lawyer for the prosecution——"

"Prosecution!" cried all.

"Yes, Orr's arrested on a charge of forgery."

The opening of the conversation I have chronicled was anything but pleasant to Henry Vorian, who was once or twice on the point of interfering to contradict some of the false rumours which the elegant but inaccurate Lardie D'Adour, was propagating. But when he heard of his father-in-law's being in custody for a crime, you may well suppose that he wished his journey at an end, or longed to be in a compartment by himself.

His musings, you may imagine, were anything but cheerful and satisfactory, and he was very glad indeed when a railway porter, shouting out something quite as difficult to spell as Houyhnhum is to pronounce, told him that he had arrived at the junction, whence another train would bear him to his destination.

The train sped onward with its human freight, the travellers in Henry's compartment little dreaming how closely their conversation had concerned him.

You cannot be too careful how you discuss general topics



in a railway carriage. I remember a friend of mine once told me that he travelled from London to Edinburgh with a quiet, bald-headed, respectable old gentleman, and that they beguiled the greater part of the journey with a discussion about a case of embezzlement by a cashier, who had absconded with twenty thousand pounds after having already defrauded his employer to about the same amount. When they arrived at Auld Reekie, a man put his head into the carriage, and blandly informed the mild little gentleman that he was a detective and that he must arrest him. And it turned out that my friend's new agreeable acquaintance was the absconding cashier himself, of whom, by-the-way, he had, my friend remembered, spoken throughout with severity tempered by charity and benevolence. I introduce this anecdote as a warning to travellers to be particular in their choice of topics for conversation.

Henry Vorian had startling intelligence for his noble parents when he reached home that evening. My lord turned blue at the news, and my lady scarlet.

"*This comes,*" she said with some asperity, "of intermarrying with low people."

"Upon my soul, Henry," said his lordship, "I think I could almost congratulate you on your wife's flight, for it will enable you to sever all connection with the family."

"You would not congratulate me if you knew how busy scandal is with my name; and Henry repeated the remarks of Lardie D'Ardour; whereat his lordship grew very wroth, and swore in his most forcible manner, to the great disgust of her ladyship.

But when the noble family of Lacquoigne began, on calm reflection, to survey the position in which they were left by the utter collapse of Mr. Orr, disgust began to give place to bewilderment.

What were they to do? They had invested their son in the Marriage Mart, and the speculation had turned out a bad one, and unluckily he was not available for a second venture. And the House of Lacquoigne could not put up its shutters like the House of Orr, and issue a notice that it had suspended payment. It was so hard, too—just as good fortune seemed to be within their grasp, and for the first time in their lives these high-born beggars had known what it was to live comfortably and be free from the terror of debts and duns—that the whole fabric they had so industriously erected should crumble.

Well might the lofty trees in the Beaudeschet avenue moan that night. They must be decimated to meet the emergency.

How many of them, instead of flecking the greensward with dappled light and shade, must fall beneath the axe, and depart to assist in the manufacture of ships, coffins, furniture, firewood, and railway-sleepers! Well might the twinkling rabbits that flit and vanished in the dusky drives, tremble and cower in their hiding-places; for they were fore-doomed to slaughter—a poor forlorn hope thrown forward to cut down the expenses. What cart-loads of them would be jolted to town to feed the vulgar million, instead of adorning the slopes and shades of Beaudeschet.

Of course his lordship's creditors, on learning Mr. Orr's failure and arrest, do not forget to press their claims. They become painfully importunate. His lordship begins to wish that there might be a rise in the price of rabbits, or a large demand for timber—or that it might become the fashion to visit Beaudeschet. He is really almost inclined to take a leaf from the book of the enterprising proprietor of Cremorne, and advertise, "This splendid baronial mansion and its magnificent grounds open daily. Great attractions! New and varied entertainments!" He wants money so badly that I verily believe, if he thought that it would realise a profit, he would open his grounds in this style, and even by way of supplying amusement to the public, start exhibitions of all sorts. Imagine Lord Lacquoigne as the Bounding Baron of the Bankruptcy Court, making both ends meet; or her ladyship as the Phenomenon Peeress, balancing her accounts on her aristocratic nose; or the Honourable H. Vorian as the Champion Swordsman, cutting down his expenses!

But we ought not to laugh at these poor people's mishaps, even though they have brought them upon themselves.

The privations of this noble family are enough to touch the hardest heart. A peeress dressed in a common print, in order to save her silks; a baron shooting rabbits for a bare subsistence; the heir of the house and title reduced to smoking a common clay pipe and coarse tobacco, because he cannot afford a Havana—these are spectacles which it is painful to contemplate.

But they are not so badly off as Mr. Orr, who finds, in spite of the numerous firm and unswerving friends who had so often publicly declared they would always be proud to stand by him, that he cannot get substantial bail, and is therefore still in custody.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## COMMITTAL AND CONVICTION.

THERE is considerable excitement and a great deal of crowding at the Mansion House when Orr, the forger, is brought before the Lord Mayor.

James Trefusis manages to get a seat, and means to hear the case out. He is a little ashamed, I hope, inwardly, of the savage joy he feels at the disgrace that has befallen one who treated Marian so cruelly.

The worshipful the lord mayor is anything but comfortable. He is not a powerful man mentally—I need hardly say that, after having admitted that he is a lord mayor—and he is a good-tempered, well-intentioned creature. He has certain social superstitions, one of the strongest of which is that one ought never to forsake a man beneath whose mahogany one's legs have reposed. This is one of the strongest of his superstitions, because it attacks him in one of his weakest points—his stomach. The man who has ever given him clear turtle has a lien on his—I was going to say “soul,” but, on consideration, will substitute “gratitude.” Now he had often sat at Mr. Orr's feasts, and was therefore horribly troubled internally—as if he had had a very bad dinner—at the thought of sitting in judgment on his *Amphitryon*.

When the prisoner is brought in, his worship does not know whether he ought to bow to him or offer to shake hands with him; so he pretends to have something to say of great importance to his clerk, and thus escapes the difficulty.

Mr. Orr is a terribly altered man. He appears to have grown thinner, and his usually rosy complexion is sallow. His dress looks neglected, and his hair unkempt. His old arrogance and magnificence of manner have disappeared. He crouches and stoops, and is already marked with the felon's brand. He looks no one in the face, but hangs his head down as if he were watching his nervous, fidgety fingers.

As he makes his appearance, there is a low, ominous murmur in court. It is not a noise that the officers can suppress. It speaks very plainly that if the prisoner were in the hands of that crowd, he would get scant mercy. And small wonder! for that crowd is chiefly composed of the unfortunate people

whom he has ruined, or well-nigh ruined — whom he has deceived by sham honesty, sham goodness, sham Christianity.

Mr. Louis, one of a well-known legal firm famous for their defences of desperate cases, is in attendance on behalf of the prisoner. The prosecution is conducted by a Q.C. His worship is compelled to resign all hope of showing favour or mercy to his former host by the presence of the Q.C., which does great credit to his honesty and impartiality.

The evidence is simple enough. The forgeries are orders, cheques, and bills, purporting to be drawn by a mercantile firm in India. They represent a large amount, and extend over a brief and very recent period of time. After the Q.C. has shortly and succinctly opened the case, the chief witness is called, who is the head of the mercantile firm, and whose arrival in England was the signal for Mr. Orr's capture. This witness, on being shown the signatures, distinctly swears that they are not in his handwriting. Being pressed, he says that, to the best of his belief, they are in the handwriting of the prisoner, with whom he has corresponded on matters of business. They bear no resemblance to his (the witness's) handwriting.

Cross-examined: They do not appear to be imitations of his signature. He should say that no one who has been accustomed to see his signature would have been deceived by them.

Re-examined: He had always banked with the prisoner. His cheques and bills were generally sent to the prisoner, with whom he was in the habit of corresponding. Should think the prisoner might have been able to manage affairs so that his signature was never seen by anyone but himself. (This question was objected to by Mr. Louis, but eventually allowed.) Believes that would be quite possible.

Mr. Louis put a question through the court, to which the witness replied that he was not practically acquainted with banking business.

The second witness was Mr. Orr's cashier. He stated that he had been in the prisoner's employment fifteen years, and knew his handwriting well. The documents produced were signed by Mr. Tasker (the last witness), to the best of his belief. He had frequently noticed that the prisoner and Mr. Tasker wrote very similar hands. (Shown the signature of last witness.) Had never seen any writing of that sort before. If that was Mr. Tasker's handwriting it was evident that the documents previously shown him could not have been signed by Mr. Tasker. Could not distinguish any dif-

ference between that handwriting and that of the prisoner. Would not swear it was the prisoner's. It was very much like it.

Mr. Louis cross-examined this witness with great severity, the drift of his questions evidently being to imply that the forgeries were committed by the witness. He elicited that witness had once been dismissed by Mr. Orr, but subsequently the dismissal was reversed.

Re-examined : The reason why Mr. Orr threatened to discharge him was because certain defalcations were detected, which Mr. Orr attributed to him. He was innocent, and the guilty person being subsequently discovered, tried, and transported, he of course retained his situation. He knew the prisoner's handwriting well, and had long been accustomed to examine handwriting with a view to guard against fraud. (The witness had been asked by Mr. Louis if he was a professed expert.)

The third witness was T. Bunce, a member of the detective police force, who deposed that, from information he had received, he took the prisoner into custody in Babel Court as he was leaving the bank. Prisoner asked him what the charge was ; on which he informed him that it was for forging the signature of Mr. Tasker, of the firm of Clark, Tasker, and Phinn, of Calcutta. Prisoner said, "I thought so." Warned him that anything he said would be used against him on his trial, whereupon he said, "Thank you ; I'll be on my guard." Searched the prisoner's room at the bank. Discovered a cheque-book (produced). The cheque marked A corresponded with one of the foils in that book. It was torn crookedly, and the edges corresponded. Found under the table a rubbish basket, in which were fragments of paper, torn up very small. Found, on fitting some of the pieces together, that the name of "George Tasker" had been written on a sheet of paper three or four times, as if for practice. The signature so written corresponded with the signature on the documents alleged to be forgeries. (The witness here handed up the joined fragments.) Also examined the blotting pad which was on prisoner's desk. Found a portion of a sheet of blotting-paper that had been torn away still adhering to the pad. On it was written "Geo. Tas"—the remainder of the signature was torn off. The writing resembled that on the forged documents. (The witness here handed up the blotting pad.)

Cross-examined : Had not been promised any reward. Thought it likely that he might get one. Did not know from whom. Other people might have used the rubbish

basket. Other people might have used the blotting pad. (Mr. Louis placed in witness's hand the joined fragments.) The signatures differed slightly. When he said they resembled those on the forged documents, he meant some of them did. The ink had run on the blotting-paper (handed to witness by Mr. Louis). It might be "Geo. Far." Was not aware that one of Mr. Orr's clerks was called George Farmer.

Re-examined : Should have done all he did as a matter of duty, without any expectation of reward. The rubbish basket was in Mr. Orr's private room. So was the blotting pad. The clerks in the outer office had plotting pads and baskets for their own use. Of the differing signatures on the joined fragments, some appeared to him to be in prisoner's ordinary handwriting ; others were in the same hand, a little disguised. It was the latter that resembled the signatures on the forged documents. Whether the writing on the blotting-paper was "Geo. Tas," or "Geo. Far," it was in the same hand as that on the forged cheques and on the joined fragments.

The last witness was an expert in handwriting, who, on being sworn, had all the papers handed to him. He was of opinion that the writing on the joined fragments was the prisoner's. It appeared as if he had been practising in order to disguise his hand, and that when he had succeeded in doing so to his satisfaction, he adopted the signature for the forgeries. The writing at the top of the joined fragments was exactly like the prisoner's ordinary hand, as shown in documents acknowledged to be his. Those at the bottom were identical with the signatures to the forged documents. The intermediate ones showed a slight resemblance to both. The writing on the blotting pad when reversed in a mirror, was clearly "Geo. Tas." It was the same as that on the forgeries.

Mr. Louis cross-examined this witness closely as to his experience, and endeavoured to shake his testimony, but without avail.

The case for the prosecution having closed, Mr. Louis made a speech in defence. He alleged that there was no case at all, that there was nothing to connect the prisoner in any way with the forgeries, and that the only things approaching to anything that might implicate him in the most remote way were to be found in the evidence of a witness who admitted that he expected a reward for what he had done. The learned gentleman then went into a detailed account of the prisoner's life and career, describing him as a man who had risen by his own exertions, honesty, and integrity to a

distinguished position; who had been an ornament to Parliament; and as a private individual, had been distinguished for piety and benevolence. His affairs, it is true, had become a little involved of late, owing chiefly, he was instructed to state, to too generous a reliance on the commercial integrity of others; but this temporary embarrassment could not for a moment be considered as likely to induce a man of Mr. Orr's probity to forfeit the advantage of a long life of honest industry for the sake of a little money. Was it likely that a man of his experience would have had recourse to so clumsy a fraud—to put it on the lowest ground? He (Mr. Louis) had no wish to cast imputations upon anyone; but it was impossible to help asking if there were not others connected with the bank who had equal opportunities and greater temptations? He was convinced that his worship would dismiss the case.

His worship, after consulting with his clerk for some time, said that he was deeply pained and shocked to see a man in Mr. Orr's position in life brought before him on so grave a charge. It would have given him sincere pleasure to dismiss the case, and send Mr. Orr away without a stain upon his character; but he felt he should not be performing his duty as chief magistrate if he did not do all in his power to have the charge fully investigated. It was to Mr. Orr's interest, as well as the interests of justice, that a most searching inquiry should be made, and every tittle of the evidence carefully sifted. He could not help saying that there appeared to him to be quite sufficient evidence for the prosecution to warrant his sending it to a jury.

The prisoner was committed for trial accordingly, and being unable to procure bail, was removed in custody.

This is a brief summary of the newspaper report of the case. I need not go over the evidence again, as adduced at the trial. Suffice it that, in spite of an able defence by an able barrister, who has since been raised to the Bench, a jury of twelve of his countrymen were unanimously of opinion that Mr. Orr was guilty. He was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.

Neglected by his former friends, deserted by his wife, forgotten by his children, the wretched man dragged out seven of the years of his cheerless captivity. At the end of that period his health appeared suddenly to give way. His constitution broke up rapidly, and though he was promptly removed to the hospital, he never recovered. His name has perished. His grave is unknown.

In this way one of those against whom James Trefusis registered a solemn vow of vengeance was removed beyond

the reach of his wrath. When James Trefusis made that vow, it seemed an absurd one—so far beyond his power of injuring him did the great millionaire appear to stand. When that vow was cancelled, the poor, broken-down, faded, miserable convict was spunk too low for his revenge.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

## ON THE QUEST.

WHEN James left her, Marian sat down in the school-room which was very quiet now the children had dispersed, and, looking her trouble straight in the eyes, tried to read all it had to tell her. It was a painful task, but she felt she must do it. She was obliged to realise the whole truth of what James had told her. She had to face the awful knowledge that the sister over whose childhood she had watched like a mother—by whose innocent pillow she had knelt at the time of her bereavement to pray for strength to watch over her as a mother should—was another being now. It seemed to her as if Alice were older than she now.

Oh, the agony of surmising how the clear, pure light of those blue eyes had died out. It was almost impossible for Marian to realise the change that must have come over the girl she remembered in the happy days in the west. It was impossible for a good woman to conceive the full extent of such a change—how a once sweet nature so fallen revolts against everything that reminds it of the past, and plunges only the more deeply, the more hopelessly, into the dreadful present.

When Marian had forced herself to acknowledge what must have been the change in her sister, she began to plan out what her future course must be. She weighed everything carefully, for she knew it was no light task she was undertaking. At its very outset she would be beset by suspicion, misapprehension—insult possibly.

She could not conceal from herself how hopeless such a quest was. When she reached home that evening she looked out of the window of her room. Her lodgings were in one of the high-lying quarters of Islington, and she looked out over a black far-spread sea of roofs, stretching away on all sides under the lurid canopy that hung over it. In those endless miles of streets, whose glare flung that red light on the



sky, how seemingly hopeless it was to think of finding her whom she was to seek.

There is something peculiarly depressing in the sight of London at night, viewed as Marian viewed it. The roar that comes up from it seems the realisation of "the howling of the wilderness" in Scripture. That hoarse sound is the combination of the noises—small and insignificant enough in themselves—of millions of lives, all going on their separate ways, utterly ignorant, entirely disregarding, of the unit that looks, and listens, and despairs. Every word, every footstep, helps to form that tremendous aggregate; yet out of the myriads of voices, the myriads of feet, not one voice possibly speaks your name, not one foot seeks you.

It has always seemed to me that the sight of London by night from a little distance is enough to break any forlorn creature's heart with the inexorable knowledge of that worst isolation— isolation in the midst of an unending crowd of fellow-beings.

The sight was melancholy and dispiriting enough to Marian. She had often looked out upon it as one does upon the midnight ocean when one is living by the seaside. It had filled her with awe and a sense of her desolation and weakness. But she had looked upon it with curiosity rather than active dread.

Now, however, the time was come when she was to plunge into its cold, cruel billows. Her heart was strong to do it, but it was hardly strange that she should hesitate for one moment on the brink.

When the gallant fellows who man the lifeboats along our coast hear the sullen signal of distress booming over the breakers, they are ready enough to launch the lifeboat and put out to save the shipwrecked. But I dare say—I hope, indeed, for the truest bravery is that which fully estimates the peril it faces—I hope that as those noble men leap into the brave boat, they turn just one look to the cottage on the cliff yonder, or the wife's pale face in the crowd, or the bonny lass there, who is down on her knees on the sand praying for her lover. I should think the better, not the worse of them for that: it is a part of the same tenderness of heart that sends them out to face the storm for the sake of the poor wretches out on the bar yonder clinging to slippery spars and whistling cordage.

So when Marian, who is about to go out in this forlorn hope to save the shipwrecked sister, who is going down in this cruel sea, that spreads out inky black before her, we shall not doubt her because the tears are slowly flowing—because she turns a longing gaze to the figure of that big broken-down man,

broken-down at the thought of losing her, but submitting to what she holds to be her duty. We shall not love her the less even because, having learnt to have a home in these humble lodgings—having spent her quiet, pleasantly melancholy and sorrowfully happy evenings here so long, she feels that she is taking a farewell of old friends. The two Chinese fans, the pair of China vases, the porcelain poodle, the little shepherd and shepherdess, the Art-Union engravings, the oil painting of her landlady's father even—all seem to be so many parts of home, all were her companions in the still evenings which are over now. She will never know again the calm and rest of the twilight hours, when duty was accomplished and the toil of the day was done.

This was the last evening she would spend at home. It was no idle sentiment that induced her to delay her task for the one night. She had to set herself right with one or two people before she took up her quest, and she felt she must do that first of all. That done, nothing could occur to hinder her or delay her search.

The first person she had to speak to was her landlady, Mrs. Warner.

Mrs. Warner was a tall, thin, elderly Scotchwoman, who had married the valet in the family where she had been "leddy's maid," as she called it. After their marriage, her master had procured her husband a messengership in one of the public offices, and she had set up a lodging-house. She was one of those hard, dry women who may be any age. Like parchment which is very new or very old, but between those two extremes may be of any age, these women are easily set down as gaunt girls or shrivelled old crones, but their years between those two ages cannot be in any way estimated.

Marian had always experienced the greatest kindness and consideration at Mrs. Warner's hands; but they were of that hard, angular sort, which prevents one from doing full justice to them. She had never been able to find out, in spite of her care and attention, whether Mrs. W. possessed a heart. Of course, she had the usual apparatus for the propulsion of the sanguineous molecules; but whether she had a metaphorical heart—the thing which is supposed to yearn to relatives, which is displayed with a skewer through it in valentines, and which is reported to suffer fracture at the hands of the faithless of the other sex—had been a mystery to Marian.

It was no easy task to tell her all that she must tell her, but Marian summoned up her fortitude and courage. She sent down word by the servant girl, who brought up the tray with

her modest little bit of supper, that she should like to see Mrs. Warner presently if she were not engaged.

When Marian had finished her supper and rang to have it cleared away, Mrs. Warner herself answered the bell, and said she "understood Miss Carlyle wished to speak to her."

Marian asked her to take a chair, which she did when she had arranged the supper things ready for removal to her satisfaction. She took a chair that was almost behind Marian. People in her rank of life—women more especially—have a knack of getting, if possible, out of the field of vision of those who are speaking to them. They do it so religiously that I am inclined to think they labour under the impression that it is a point of politeness.

It was really a relief to Marian, who had not to look straight at that grave carved-looking face, which reminded her of the big heads outside some walking-stick shops—very hard fixed faces, without much expression. At the same time she could watch Mrs. Warner out of the corners of her eyes unobserved, and see what effect her words were having upon her.

So, with some hesitation and difficulty, Marian began her story. She did not mention names or places, but she told the whole story of her life and of the shame which had befallen her sister. And then she told Mrs. Warner—a little more decidedly and distinctly—that she intended to seek for her sister until she found her.

When she came to the part about Alice, she saw that Mrs. Warner was making very peculiar grimaces. She was screwing up her hard, uncomely features in a way that reminded one irresistibly of a nut-cracker with a very obdurate nut in its jaws; and then she began to fidget with the tray, to push the dish and plate on it, to move the jug—finally, to twitch the tray cloth. And when she got as far as that, she fairly broke down and began to cry, wiping her eyes with the tray-cloth. The contortions which Marian had begun to fear were signs of horror and anger were merely the convulsions of a very dry face that had some difficulty in crying because it had not been used to it for such a long time.

This outburst, as may be imagined, took Marian by surprise, and I think she began to cry again, too, for a little while.

Presently, with a great many gulps and peculiar noises, which it is conjectured were sobs, rather startled to find themselves in such an apparently uncongenial bosom, Mrs. Warner rose and left the room. Marian heard her go up stairs to her own bed-room. Then came the lugging of a

heavy box across the floor; and then down came Mrs. Warner with a faded little sampler. Without a word, she thrust it into Marian's hand.

Marian looked at it and read—

“JEAN MARY WARNER,”

with the date of her birth. It was Mrs. Warner's daughter.

Marian understood all the story.

“Eh, lassie, the one of all my bairns that I reared; and it a'maist mak's me wish she'd just deed like a' the rest. Eh, my lassie, my lassie!”

Then these two women sat down side by side and comforted each other, for a common sorrow brought them together.

Mrs. Warner related her sad history to Marian in her turn. It was the old, old story—the old sad, bad, wicked story! A pretty face, and an ill-assorted attachment, and then the disappearance of the girl.

Marian tried to console the mother with the hope that after all her daughter was married—that it was only a runaway match.

“Nay, nay! I canna believe that my lassie would ha'e forgot her auld mither that fashion if it had been sae. Ye'll no think that, surely. Besides, there's just ae thing mair.”

And then she told Marian that she had received a letter—or rather an envelope—containing a lock of a baby's hair, and that the handwriting was her daughter's, and the postmark was a London postmark. “And, eh, Miss Carlyle,” said the poor woman, “ye could no ken the differ between that wee bit of gowden hair and the lock I had cut from my daughter's head when she was a tiny bairn.”

Marian's object in confiding her story to Mrs. Warner was to account for her absence of an evening. She had been afraid the stern, prim old Scotchwoman might be prone to think hardly, and would perhaps make a disturbance about her late hours. But there was no fear of that now. Mrs. Warner could feel for her, and even proposed, kind old soul, to accompany Marian in her search, because her age would be some protection to her. But Marian declined the kind offer.

“There's one, Mrs. Warner, that would go anywhere for me, by whose side I would not fear any danger, and he made me the same offer, but I refused it. For if there's anyone with me, it may scare her away, poor thing! but I'm hoping, if she ever sees me alone, looking for her and longing for her, she won't be able to help running to me and kissing me. And if

I can only get her to my heart, I'm thinking she'll never, never want to go away again."

The woman felt Marian was right, so she folded up her poor faded relic, and put it in the bosom of her gown, and then for the first time in her life she kissed Marian; and finally took up the supper tray and disappeared.

Thus was one of Marian's difficulties overcome. Her next task was to tell the Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth.

He visited the school next day, so Marian asked him if he were very busy that morning.

"Not more than usual, Miss Carlyle. In fact, less than usual, for there's less sickness about."

"I'm glad to hear it, Sir, for the poor people have had a sore time of it. But if you're not going away till after school, I should like to speak with you particularly, if you wouldn't mind waiting after the children are gone."

"With the greatest pleasure, Miss Carlyle. At least, no! I'm not quite so sure of that, for I'm afraid you're going to tell me that you're going to leave us."

"No, it is not that, Mr. Rudgeworth. On the contrary, I think you will have me here as a fixture—that is, if you choose."

"Choose? We're only too fortunate in getting you."

The Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth goes into the play-yard, and sits down on the low wall that surrounds it and thinks.

He wonders how it is that Marian's intended marriage is put a stop to. He thinks the man must be behaving very badly. "A man might be very happy with such a woman—so clever, such a manager. She and her husband, supposing he had had a university education, might open a school, and make it answer uncommonly well."

You see the Rev. Augustus is almost falling into a meditation as to the advisability of his proposing to Marian himself. In fact, he is only restrained by the suspicion that if he were to marry, the interest which so many of his female parishioners take in him might be seriously diminished, if not altogether destroyed. Young parsons will dream these dreams, and be scared from the altar by no more powerful arguments than his.

Presently the hum in the school suddenly breaks into a clamour, and in another minute the youngsters come rushing down the steep wooden stairs like so many small thunderstorms, and then disperse, running, and shouting, and pushing in the greatest possible glee at having done with school for an hour or so.

When the last urchin has gone, the curate goes up to the

school-room, where Marian is walking up and down nervously. It is some little time before she speaks, for she finds great difficulty in telling him what she wishes him to know.

He listens attentively, shaking his head sadly when she tells him about poor Alice. At last she announces to him her intention of finding her sister.

"I must work during the day to get my living; and in the evening—all night if I think it will be of use—I shall seek my sister through the length and breadth of London, and I *will* find her. Why I tell you this is, that you may decide, Sir, whether you think, under such circumstances, you can continue to employ me here. I know that I shall be misunderstood and misrepresented, but I am determined to find her, cost what it may. If I can get no other means of a livelihood I must do needlework."

"Miss Carlyle," says the curate, taking her by the hand—and somehow all the ludicrous about him fades away as he does it—"I respect your brave spirit. I pray you may succeed. I can see no reason in such noble devotion to duty why we should seek other aid than yours. On the other hand, it seems to me a further proof of your fitness and of your conscientious discharge of your duties. I am glad you will still work with us, and I feel proud indeed to be associated with you in your labours. Heaven speed your quest!"

He shakes her hand and bows very low—an act of quite involuntary homage—as he takes his leave. A little while ago he was thinking he would condescend to marry this girl. Now he wishes it were his fortune to be worthy of aspiring to it.

"He's a lucky fellow whoever he is that she's going to marry," says the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth. And he is right!

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## CORMACK'S COMING TRIUMPH.

EVERYTHING had been prepared at Wheal Cormack for the great occasion when the engine was to be put to work. But a sudden blight falls on the venture.

Such sudden blights are not uncommon in mining speculations. Of the lotteries in this world, mining is the most uncertain, and, I think, taken altogether, the most unsatisfactory. It is the fashion to speak of the miner as one who gropes in the dark. But the figure does not half convey the real difficulties he has to encounter. Put a man in a dark room, and let him grope about there for a walking-stick, let us say. He goes round and round, or across and across the space until he happens to hit upon the place where his stick is. There is nothing to conceal it from him. But the miner's groping for ore is much more limited. He does not grope in air. He has to find what he wants through stone which it is infinite labour to cut. He may be so near the object of his desires, that only an inch separates him from it; but it is an inch of solid granite. I should like to have the magical power for just one minute to see as in a mirror all the mines that are being driven underground. In how many of them we should see the sturdy, eager miners tearing their way into the bowels of the rock—where all is barren—with a great treasure of the coveted metal within a few feet of their working place.

I believe Henry Cormack would have given a considerable sum for such a glimpse into the internal arrangements of the earth.

For Captain Tregenna has been over to see him, and he reports that the new shaft is sunk several fathoms below the place where they hoped to cut into the lode; but there is not a sign of ore anywhere.

"Keep on sinking, cap'n!" says Henry Cormack.

"I'm thinking it would be best to drive a level," says the other.

"Do anything you like, only cut the lode before we put the engine to work, or we shall never get East Wheal Cormack floated."

"E'es, sure, 'tis of that I'm thinking," says the captain. "Maybe 'twould be best for to put off the engine a bit."

He says this with evident reluctance ; nor is Cormack less desirous than he is of getting the engine up.

" Well, you must try a bit longer, cap'n, and see what you can do."

So the captain goes back to mine ; but he returns in the course of a few days to Polvrehan with a longer face than ever, and no wonder ; for the rich lode which they had been pursuing in the old level has stopped suddenly. It is completely lost !

" The ground was looking so keenly to the la'ast, and now there's ne'er a bit o' gossan, nor so much 's a scrap of mundick.\* She've a gone so clean as ef you'd a-took mun out with a la'adle !"

This is bad news indeed. It is evident that during some tremendous volcanic convulsion the crust of the earth containing the vein of metal had been upheaved until it cracked and fell back, but of course did not join exactly. These extraordinary cleavages and derangements of strata are the scourge of the miner. Sometimes the variation is very slight, and a little exploring soon brings the men on the right track again. But sometimes they entirely baffle sagacity and experience, and unfortunately the shift of the lode at Wheal Cormack came under the last head.

Captain Tregenna is a shrewd miner, fortunately for Cormack. He has a large quantity of ore on the mine, which he would not send to the "ticketings"—as the sales of the ore are called—for fear of a glut. He will be able for some time, therefore, to keep up the supply, and so conceal to some extent the want of success. There is always an amount of loyalty among the miners which induces them to keep up appearances for the mine they are employed on ; so the secret does not ooze out, and nobody outside the concern knows that Wheal Cormack, from being a prosperous venture, has suddenly in one minute become a blank.

But there has for a long time been considerable talk in the neighbourhood about the great dinner there was to be when the new engine was put to work.

People know that the engine-house and stack are built, and that the engine is ready, too. Cormack sees this difficulty, and overcomes it in a masterly manner. He gets the architect to report that the stack is unsafe, and the engine-house not built according to plan. He in the meantime makes a quiet arrangement with the builder. So the stack and engine-house

\* Gossan is the "country," or ground, enclosing the lode. Mundick is iron or arsenical pyrites.



have to be pulled down and rebuilt; and as that is an operation which takes time, he calculates that they will be able to prosecute their search for the missing lode in all directions, and recover it before the festivities.

Luckily for Cormack, James Trefusis is in no hurry now to obtain possession of Polvrehan. Even in his misfortunes this rogue seems favoured by fortune.

When Marian once more broke off their engagement, poor James felt that there was little hope of its renewal—at all events, for a long time. He would not show her how deeply he felt it, so he determined to creep away out of sight somewhere. He prevailed on Charlie Crawhall to go to the South of France with him. And it was lucky for him that Charlie did go, for they had not been on the continent long before James was laid up with a severe fever, and only escaped death by a little.

While he is slowly recovering, loitering about the sunny little French village, he thinks nothing more of Polvrehan; and as he has left no instructions with Mr. Totting, his lawyer, that gentleman does not press Henry Cormack to deliver up possession; and he, having urgent reasons for still remaining on the spot, does not evince the slightest desire to vacate the house.

Meanwhile, Captain Tregenna and his corps are working for their lives to hit off the lode again. But it seems to have gone down—it is a dip, and they must sink many fathoms, so the captain fears, before there is any chance of their seeing ore again.

The house and stack have been pulled down, and are being rebuilt. They are not being a bit better built now than they were before, and they are built of the same materials; so that, on the whole, I take it the architect's condemnation of the old buildings has not conduced to any very great advantage or improvement.

Nearly a twelvemonth passes in this way.

Very slowly it passes over the head of the poor invalid down in the sunny South of France. He is not allowed to be quite unmolested in his peaceful retreat. The English Government, which refused so steadily to take any notice of his invention when he offered it originally, has taken a great fancy to it now that it comes as a foreign invention. "The Secretary of State for War directs" innumerable people, whose signatures are invariably illegible, and whose English is not always faultless, to request that Mr. Trefusis will put himself into communication with the Ordnance Committee, in order that his gun—in the official communications this part is invariably so worded

as to mean, grammatically speaking, the Secretary of State's gun—may be tested and examined, with a view to its adoption in the British army.

James, not caring to trouble himself about the matter, does not reply, and, accordingly, a member of the Civil Service is despatched to the South of France, for the special purpose of communicating with Mr. Trefusis on the matters alluded to "in communications from this office, dated, etc., etc."

The gentleman to whom this delicate mission is entrusted turns out to be no other than James's old friend—or rather acquaintance, for the terms they were on were those of opponents rather than friends—Mr. Ledbitter. He entirely forgets ever having seen James, or even having heard his name. But separated, as he is, from the depressing influence of the official rabbit-warren in Pall Mall, he is a pleasant enough gentleman, and performs his mission in a very polite and business-like manner.

He is very sorry to see that Mr. Trefusis is suffering from ill-health, and suggests that he had better return to England for advice. He could then communicate with the Secretary of State about the gun. Finding James not to be caught in this way, he appeals to his patriotism with as little success. James cannot help telling him that a little more patriotism among the officials at the office would have saved all this trouble, and that his own patriotism got a fatal chill in the Pall Mall passages. Mr. Ledbitter is very sorry, and says, quite unconscious that he is laying the rod on his own back, that some of the fellows are inattentive, and don't take any interest in their business; and then he branches off into a scheme for improving the Civil Service generally, and his own office in particular. You will always find Government clerks pleasant and instructive company, for they can always be induced, without the least trouble, to discuss the prospects of the service, and the amelioration of their own condition. In a good many instances, you will find it advisable to restrict them to this subject, as they are not entertaining on other topics.

The twelvemonth passes rather slowly for Captain Cormack, who waits day after day for news from the Bal, but only gets the same intelligence—anything but cheerful intelligence—that the lode has not yet been cut in either of the shafts. And this goes on for ten or eleven months.

At last, however, the captain comes in with a more hopeful story. He produces a stone of ore from the new shaft. Cormack is suspicious for a little while, and thinks the captain is tricking him with an old specimen, but Tregenna denies the

charge strenuously. It is time, he urges, to hurry on the rebuilding of the engine-house and stack. So Cormack wakes up the builder, and the edifice is run up rapidly. And by the time the roof is on, the lode has been cut in the new shaft at a very low level, and has been hit off again, thanks to the indications found in the new cutting, in the old shaft.

So Wheal Cormack is getting into full swing again, and the invitations to the great feast when the new engine is to be put to work, are beginning to fly about. There is to be a dance and a large tea for the Bal maidens, and endless supplies of beef and cider for the men. A tent is to be erected in front of the "Count House," and long tables will be erected in it on tressels, and the adventurers and all the people connected with mining in the neighbourhood (neighbourhood meaning in this county, where there was no railway as yet, a very large area indeed) are asked to the dinner. Captain Cormack is to take the chair; and there is to be an endless supply of champagne, without which no great venture (and, indeed, no important stroke of business) can be concluded.

Captain Tregenna is elated to a tremendous degree at the notion, and Cormack is glad of an opportunity of getting off a lot of his land for mining purposes, as well as for the chance of fuddling a lot of men at the company's cost, until they get ripe to buy the shares he has to offer.

Henry Cormack surveys his position with infinite internal satisfaction. By his own exertions and industry he has raised himself to a proud and independent position. He is very well off; and if in this part of the world a few people knew what he had been—and some what he still was—if he was not entirely popular and universally respected in this immediate neighbourhood, he, at any rate, possessed the means of going away and living somewhere else.

Naturally enough, he was not a very stern and unforgiving judge of his own actions, but he was really sincere in his belief that, after all, he couldn't have done anything so very wrong, or surely he never would have been so prosperous.

The coming dinner will be the first occasion on which he will publicly appear as the great proprietor and capitalist of the district, and he looks forward to it eagerly. Some of the people who will be there have snubbed and despised him in former times: it will be his turn now! All of them will look up to him with admiration and respect. He spends a good deal of time in arranging a very fine speech for the occasion. He goes down to the quiet banks of Rella of an evening, and recites it with great effect. It is a little long—but then,

when a man has been waiting all his life to say it, one can hardly complain if it be a trifle lengthy.

He is a very prosperous and a very comfortable man. Conscience does not trouble him ; he has generously pardoned all his own little offences, and he feels that he is rewarded for his clemency by the good fortune which waits on his undertakings. He rides over every day to see how the men are getting on with the engine. He is restless and impatient for the hour of his triumph.

"Will the day never come?"

When does the day ever fail to come, Henry Cormack? Sooner or later it comes, and sooner or later it will come for you. I don't think you would hurry those workmen so if you knew all. But you do not—and it's lucky for you.

You picture yourself at the head of that long table in the tent, haranguing the guests. I can picture you there, but the working out of the subject in each case will be different.

What a strange thing Fate is! Some of us look forward with such anxiety to the day which is destined to be the darkest in our life—the day which, could we only foresee, we should wish indefinitely postponed. We wait and wait, and long and worry, and fret for the day, and then when it comes we wish we had never seen it break.

And then what things we set our hearts upon! Take this Cormack, for instance ; he is hovering about the head of the long deal table which the workmen are putting up. If he could only have a foreknowledge of what is to be, he would turn away from that spot with a shudder.

"Eh, won't it be bra'ave fun?" asks Tregenna, coming into the tent. "'Twere worth waiting vor this la'ast twelmonth, eh, cap'n, for if we had'n a waited it would be awver now, where-as now tes to come. Oh, 'twere well worth waitin' a twelmonth for."

"Worth waiting twenty twelvemonths for," said Cormack.

Well, after all, these things are matters of opinion.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

MAJORA CANAMUS.

IN one of the obscurest streets of the obscurest quarter in the obscure town of Boulogne there appeared just about this time a certain Captain and Mrs. Canton. Boulogne is, I believe, rather accustomed to the sudden unannounced arrival of English people who have very little money and very little luggage, and who stay for indefinite periods, seldom going further inland, but spending much time in gazing across the ocean towards where the white cliffs of England might be supposed to be, but where there is only a dim distance discernible.

I trust I shall be pardoned by our lively neighbours for speaking of that pleasant watering-place, Boulogne, as an obscure town. What I mean is—not that the agreeable place is unknown to the world, for it is far-famed; but that there is hanging about the majority of the English inhabitants a certain cloud and dimness, which envelopes the visitor in a complete fog as to the antecedents, the present means, and the future prospects of those with whom he is thrown into company.

Shabby gentility, and an aristocracy which appears to make its living by playing at billiards, divide the society between them; and it was to the aristocracy that Captain Canton belonged. A neater hand with a cue, and a more sure one at a hazard—under certain circumstances—has seldom, I fancy, been seen. When he struck a ball, there was that “click!” which, to a practised ear, proclaims the stroke of a good player; but unfortunately the captain was nervous in playing with strangers, and used to bungle sadly. He missed the plainest strokes, and never got a break at all. It was really remarkable.

Of course this diffidence wore off after a time; but as it was generally so obstinate as not to disappear until the captain's opponent felt confident enough to challenge him to play at heavy stakes, this little defect in his nervous system, instead of being disadvantageous, was—quite accidentally, of course—rather in his favour than otherwise.

I must do the captain the justice of saying that his non-success always seemed to surprise him. After missing some very easy stroke, he never failed to assure his adversary that

"he should do better presently;" though he lost his temper so often when he had repetitions of ill-luck, that an improvement did not seem likely.

When, however, his adversary began to raise the stakes to any considerable amount, the importance of playing well seemed to nerve the captain for the effort, and not unfrequently the man who had missed the simplest "pot" in the world, made a cannon after four or five angles, and went off with a break that surprised his opponent considerably.

I suppose it was because knowing them so well he felt no diffidence in playing with them, that the markers at the various tables were not to be prevailed upon to wield a cue against the captain. Indeed, few of the regular settled inhabitants cared to encounter him on the green cloth—possibly for the same reason.

Captain Canton was a very fascinating man. He could talk anyone into a game at billiards—or, indeed, into almost anything. The ladies—what a queer, odd lot they were—all of them thought very highly of him. In fact, to use their own words, they considered him a "dangerous dear."

The captain and his wife—a delicate woman, who suffered from weakness of the eyes—had been living in great style for some time after they came to the continent; but not long after the failure of Orr's bank in Babel Court, Lombard Street—in fact, as the news reached them, when they were staying at Hombourg—they drew in their horns, and since that time appeared to have some difficulty in doing what appears to be an everlasting effort, if we may judge from one of the emblems selected to signify eternity—namely, making the two ends meet.

I dare say my readers have found little difficulty in identifying Captain Canton with Major Cantlow, and the miserable woman who passed for his wife with Honoria Vorian, the poor, revengeful creature, who found, as revengeful people often do find, that her studied plan of retribution was telling hardest against herself.

When they heard of old Orr's failure and arrest, you may be sure she had no pleasant time of it. Cantlow was a coward and a bully, and he was consequently very brave as far as words went, and with a woman. He taunted his victim with having cheated him, and declared that she knew of the fate impending over her father when she ran away with him. He had no money invested in the bank in reality, but he complained as much as if all the wealth of the Indies had been placed to his credit there, and had disappeared in the general smash.

They had lived at a princely rate when they first came to Hombourg, for the captain had calculated that he could always make use of Honoria to draw on her father; and he began accordingly putting in motion a very grand scheme for breaking the bank of the gambling table. It was, he believed, an infallible scheme. Like all gamblers, he nursed the hope of inventing such a plan, and he had had ample time to mature his design, for he had never had the requisite funds to put his theory into practice, and so had gone on proving and trying, correcting minor details, and bringing every minute point to the utmost perfection. Now, for the first time perhaps in his life, he had the means of putting his theory to the test, and he determined to give it a full trial.

He lost heavily at first—very heavily indeed, and even in the face of the belief that he could always fall back upon Mr. Orr for supplies, was a little startled at the heavy set against him. But his theory was not a rapid scheme of demolition. It was the result of a calculation of chances, and would have to be put off until he had calculated the average run of luck for many nights. Then he would try his *grand coup*!

He played night after night, and for a time fortune changed, and he began to win a little; but the fickle goddess did not smile long. He began to lose as heavily as ever again.

The old *habitués* of the table soon came to perceive that he was exploiting a scheme, and watched him. The other players looked on with wonder at a man who lost and won with such equanimity.

"Doubtless a milord Anglais," said Adolphe, who was boldly venturing his louis, whispering to Beniot, who was going in for five-franc pieces.

"Oh, but yes; and by my faith a rich one!" says his friend.

"This Monsieur," says the old Count Balbaisse, whose white moustache has swept that green cloth any time these ten years, "this Monsieur has a plan infallible to break the bank;" and he shrugs his shoulders.

"Ah," says the gray-headed old colonel to whom he confides this, "we have seen so many such, eh?"

"And all equally successful!"

"Yes, by my faith, all."

"This seems to me the same that crazed that poor Cadousalle, who blew out his brains yonder;" and the count tosses one end of his gray moustache over his left shoulder in the direction of a neighbouring hotel.

But Cantlow perseveres with a courage worthy of a better cause, and Honoria figures, to her great delight, at the balls and entertainments. The time for the English has not yet arrived, so she runs no danger of being recognised. And she figures about in all her jewels, and makes half the foreigners in love with her brilliants and her weak eyes.

But one night, as she is in the midst of her gaiety, comes to her the major, with a pale face and fiery eyes. He clutches her by the wrist, heedless of the fact that she has a meek partner waiting until she buttoned her glove, to conduct her through the pleasant mazes of the waltz. The major half drags her to a quiet corner, where he takes an English paper from his pocket, and shows her the news of her father's failure and arrest for forgery.

"Good gracious! Can it be true?" she says slowly, after a long pause, during which she has read and re-read the paragraph as if she doubted the evidence of her eyes.

"True! oh, true enough! Why the deuce didn't I see through his cursed commercial successes and his ostentatious honesty?"

"I cannot and will not believe it. He may be unfortunate, but I am sure he has done nothing wrong."

"Oh, gammon!" says the feeling major. "He's just as big a cheat as the rest, and you knew it, and that's the reason why you ran away with me."

"Sir, you forget yourself!" says Honoria, who is conscious that her meek partner is hovering in the neighbourhood, waiting till this jealous Englishman has done scolding his wife for dancing with such a fascinating Adonis.

"Oh, no, I don't. I'm thinking of myself fast enough, and what a deuce of a hole you've let me into. I've spent nearly all the money, and I haven't given my scheme anything like half a trial. Egad, when I said I'd fight it out till the bank broke, I little thought it would be the bank in Babel Court!"

"What will they do to him if—if it should be true?" asks Honoria with some difficulty.

"Hang him, I hope."

"Oh, no!" she gasps, clutching his arm, "not that, surely not that! Tell me not that!"

"What a fool you are. I should have thought you would have known they don't hang for forgery nowadays. Hasn't it been talked over in the family? I believe it's a little family swindle. You don't suppose I'm going to believe you weren't all in it!"

Honoria was ready to strike him almost; but she was obliged to curb her temper, for she wished to learn the worst.



"Will you tell me honestly and civilly what is the extent of punishment that can be awarded in such a case—where—where the person is guilty?"

"Depends on the amount. I suppose he did it for something handsome—you'll know the amount, I dare say—and if it's large, why it will be transportation for life; and"—here the captain ground his teeth and swore frightfully—"if they hanged him, it would not be a bit less than he deserved!"

So the major went back to the gaming table, where he lost with less grace than usual; and Honoria returned to the ball-room, where she danced with less grace than usual. And within a day or two they took their departure, and when next we hear of them are domiciled in the shabby lodgings of the shabby street of shabby Boulogne, where we found Captain and Mrs. Canton at the beginning of the chapter.

From the evening when he told her the news of her father's failure and disgrace, the conduct of the major to Honoria altered entirely. He had become indifferent at Hombourg—at Boulogne he was brutal.

She was left to her own resources entirely. She could have no gaiety; and if she could have had it would not have cared for it, because her jewels had all gone to pay the captain's gambling debts. As he intended making a long sojourn in Boulogne, he was extremely scrupulous as to debts of honour.

They had to depend on his skill—perhaps I might use a less pleasant word—for their livelihood, and I must do him the credit of saying that he worked at his profession unceasingly. Few pigeons landed in Boulogne on a flight from the British isles without undergoing a plucking at the hands of the captain. He was generally the fortunate winner of the first pluckings, for he was of a gentlemanly exterior, and these poor pigeons had as a rule been warned against seedy swindlers only, and so fell into his trap the more readily, especially as he usually told them, in strict confidence, within a few minutes after they had begun to play, that it was very unsafe to take a cue with a stranger in this seaport, as he had found to his cost, etc., etc.—putting his dupe so off his guard that his fleecing was made a certainty.

Unfortunately, nobody can pluck pigeons without leaving a few feathers about, and occasionally, too, permitting a bird to escape half-plucked as a warning to his companions.

So at last the captain's little game began to be too well known, and business was a little slack.

What sufferings Honoria underwent then were terrible. While he had been pretty successful, he had doled her out a paltry pittance, which she, with the wonderful adaptability of

her sex to circumstances, had contrived to make answer all her necessities.

But when his skill began to fail in supplying him with money, he cut off her poor allowance altogether. She must get money how she could; she might write to her father or her mother—or her husband—for it. He was obliged to have a little cash about him—was obliged to keep a stock-in-trade—to dine and smoke and drink like a gentleman.

Then the struggle became hard indeed for Honoria. At first she tried to get out of her difficulty by borrowing of the landlady, and telling her to ask the captain for the money when he came in. But the captain only said very politely, "Oh, if Madame borrows, Madame must pay;" so she did not get much by that move.

At last she was reduced, in order to get a few francs to pay for her dinner, to use the miserable accomplishments with which her education had been adorned as a girl. She sold little shell-covered models to the shops—paintings of flowers and bits of fancy work—earning just enough to give her a few pence profit beyond the cost of the materials.

So she struggled on for a time.

At last there came to Boulogne a wealthy young Englishman, the son of a prosperous manufacturer, who gave him a full purse and leave to travel. With this young fellow the captain speedily struck up a close and warm acquaintance. At first the young fellow was so generous, and fond of giving dinners to his new friend, so delighted to have a guide and philosopher at any price, that the captain had no need to pluck him.

But however generous a man may be, he grows rather tired of giving dinners and fêtes without any invitation in return.

So at last the captain, being almost taunted with his want of hospitality by his new friend, invited him to a dinner; and he determined after dinner to invite the young fellow to play, and then and there to bleed him to the best of his power.

But the lad had been at the University a term or two, and had matriculated in billiards there, and was not an easy prey. The captain had to play his best, and to exercise his most cunning craft in order to get any advantage of his opponent.

Unfortunately, he was driven to try, as a last resource, a little sharp practice, which was detected. Sharp words ensued; and the quarrel at last waxed so warm that the young manufacturer advanced to the captain with his fists doubled, promising him a sound thrashing.

The captain, or rather—to paint him in his true colours—Major Cantlow, was a coward. When he saw his opponent coming at him, he turned deadly pale, sprang back, and, just as the lad was about to strike him, felled him with a clubbed cue, and then ran from the place.

This happened abroad, you remember, and there was only one course to be adopted there under such circumstances. A friend of the young Englishman called at Cantlow's lodgings next morning to appoint a hostile meeting.

But there was no Cantlow to be found!

Honorina had heard him come in the night before—had heard him moving about in the sitting-room for some time—had heard him go down stairs and leave the house. Since then she knew nothing of him.

Before long it was too apparent that this cur had fled—had run away, and left this most unhappy of women alone and penniless.

Then came for her the very bitterest struggle of all.

With burning tears, with agony and shame insupportable, she wrote a letter to her husband, confessing her fault, asking pardon, and imploring relief. It was the last and only resource that was left for her; and it was not until she was driven to it by the direst necessity that she posted the letter.

Then she sat down, and waited to see what her fate was to be.

## CHAPTER L.

## GOING HOME.

WHEN Henry Vorian received his wife's letter, he said nothing to Lord and Lady Lacquoigne, but went straight off to Mrs. Orr.

He had not much difficulty in finding her. She had, as we know, saved something out of the wreck, and was now living in a pretty public retirement under the assumed character of a deeply-wronged woman. I dare say the greater part of the world thought her so; for the greater part of the world is ready enough, as a rule, to take one for what one represents oneself to be. But accepting her definition of her position, it quietly let her drop, nevertheless. She was an injured woman in more senses than one; she had lost her wealth and position, and that is an injury in the eyes of society that nothing can atone for. Pitied, but passed by, Mrs. Orr was bewailing her fate in a small cottage near Richmond.

Thither, accordingly, Henry Vorian made his way with Honoria's letter.

At first he was refused admittance, for Mrs. Orr supposed he had come to claim his child, to which she was much attached as the last relic of the daughter she had really loved. Henry pencilled the reason of his wish to see her on the back of his card, and sent it up to her. He was at once ushered in.

Mrs. Orr was dressed in something as nearly like a widow's suit of weeds as possible; in fact she had everything on but the cap, which I suppose was hardly the correct thing to wear while her husband was alive. It was a sort of protest—as if she said, “I ought to be a widow, and should be if unfortunately I had not a husband who still dares to exist.”

Henry Vorian did not say much to this strange woman, with her tenderness for her child and her sternness to her husband. He handed her the letter.

She burst into tears at the sight of the well known angular handwriting. How well she remembered Honoria's acquiring that elegant Italian hand—an accomplishment she almost envied her. When the daughter of the house could write like that you may depend upon it all the invitation notes and other cartels demanded by Society were penned by her, and she had ample employment. Mrs. Orr had reason to remember that

hand, though not altogether from the number of fond and affectionate letters her child had written to her.

With much sobbing and a great deal of grief, which was, I believe, not the less real and deep because it was vulgar and noisy, Mrs. Orr read Honoria's wild and rambling epistle through once or twice. She could not quite understand it the first time, owing partly to her own state of perplexity, partly to her daughter's incoherency. When she had at last finished the perusal, she turned to Henry.

"What do you intend to do?"

"What do you advise?"

"You will take her back and forgive her!"

"Never! That I am determined on."

"Then why—why did you come to me?"

"I thought you might wish to assist her. I did not need advice from you as to my own course. Had I needed advice on that, I should have sought it of my father and mother."

"Oh, they'd give you hard enough advice of course. But there—I didn't mean to say anything rude. Forgive me—and give me your advice."

"The best thing you can do is to send her some money. She says she is starving!"

"Poor dear—poor dear! And she used to every luxury—at least while she was with us."

"She was not starved while at my house, Madam, though I did not give such sumptuous dinners as Mr. Orr."

"There—there, I didn't mean to offend you. Oh, dear—oh, dear, what am I to do? I should like to have my child here with me, but how is it to be done?"

With all her vulgarity, Mrs. Orr was an artful and very persuasive woman. She found it would be to her advantage to conciliate Henry, and she took all trouble to do so. She cajoled and lamented, she implored and entreated, and succeeded at last in enlisting his sympathy.

Henry Vorian was not, as the reader of this story, I hope, knows, a very bad man—certainly not a cruel one. He softened somewhat at the picture Mrs. Orr drew of the abject distress of the woman who had been in name at least a wife to him. Possibly the face which he had seen and believed almost to be the face of a ghost, softened him a little, too.

The end was that he actually promised Mrs. Orr to go over and fetch Honoria from Boulogne, and bring her to her mother. It would have been a foolish—nay, a fatal mistake in the eye of his lawyer, but it never occurred to Henry to consult Mr. Scrooby on the subject.

I don't think, to do her justice, Mrs. Orr knew that by

such an act Henry was compromising his case. She was only most anxious to recover her child, and saw in him her sole chance of doing so.

It was arranged that Mrs. Orr should write to Honoria and send her some money at once, and that in the letter containing it she should prepare her for Henry's arrival, and explain to her clearly his purpose in so doing.

"Impress upon her that my thus rescuing her from want and impending disgrace is the last and utmost act of consideration or pardon she is to expect from me."

Mrs. Orr promised—and performed. Honoria was warned of her husband's intention to fetch her from Boulogne, and hand her over to her mother—"who would be only too happy amid her wrongs and miseries to welcome back her dearest child. She could forgive and forget the past, though others could not and would not—not even the man who had married her simply for her money." You see, she said nothing about the parents who sold her a title.

Honoria was in a terrible state of perturbation at the news of her husband's intention to fetch her. She could not but feel that his doing thus much was far more than she deserved, and she felt deeply grateful. But still she dreaded the meeting.

There was in reality little to dread. He came to her with a cold reserve, as if he had been almost a stranger, and it chilled and deadened the warm feelings of gratitude she would fain have expressed.

They met as if they were the most casual and careless of acquaintance.

The morning of the day on which they were to set sail for England dawned dark and lowering. A long bank of leaden clouds obscured the horizon, and straggling detachments of ominous-looking vapours hurried past overhead. The sea was of the same dull hue as the sky, whitening more and more with ragged white foam edges—like grinning teeth—as the rack thickened overhead. For from the long low bank of cloud there presently began to spread a gloomy canopy that filled the heavens with a sombre lurid twilight.

Whiter grew the sea, and louder and angrier was its voice, as it flung its long waves on the echoing shore.

There were no fishing boats out. The sailors looked to windward, and shook their heads when you asked why they did not put out.

Many of the passengers who were to go by the steamer cried off; for it was clearly going to be very ugly weather indeed.

With a terrible recollection of their honeymoon tour, Henry remembered that his wife suffered much in the smoothest sea. He felt it would be almost brutal to ask her to face such a storm as was coming.

He told her of his intention to wait until the storm had passed—that they should probably sail the next day, and that in the meantime, as she had given up her lodgings, he would take rooms for her at his hotel. She was very grateful for the consideration. But he checked at once any expression of her feeling by his coldness. He felt that it was necessary to assume a stern and unyielding position towards her, lest she should be induced to hope that he might relent and forgive her. That was out of the question.

The day did not belie the promise of the morning. The packet put out twice, and was twice compelled to put back. The third time she managed to make her way out, and stood away for England. There were many anxious eyes fixed on her that watched her until the thick curtain of rain, which presently descended, shut her from their sight. She had a fearfully rough passage, and was very late, but she reached her destination at last in safety.

The storm came down heavily on the French coast. First of all came the thick darkness of the rain, to be presently gashed and seamed by vivid flashes of blue lightning, followed by peals of thunder that made the whole town tremble.

It was a terrible and yet a grand sight. Henry Vorian spent the evening in watching it. He did not care to go to his hotel till late, so he braved the pitiless beating of the rain, and with a few courageous spirits, and those whose duty it was to do so, he stood on the pier and watched the conflict of the elements.

Night came on early, so thick was the gloom. And still the storm raged and roared. At last, wearied out, Henry Vorian sought his hotel.

The lady, he was told, had been greatly terrified by the thunder and lightning, and had gone to bed some hours ago. He was not sorry for it, for he was saved the pain of an interview. He sat and smoked a cigar, and then retired to rest. As she showed him the way to his room, the chambermaid pointed out to him the room where Madame slept. She was, said the chambermaid, almost asleep when she looked in there, but "*elle a souffert beaucoup*," said the kind little creature; adding, that she did not wonder, for such an awful tempest had not been known for years.

Henry was very weary. He got into bed as rapidly as he

could, and was soon in that half-conscious state bordering on actual sleep when we mingle realities with our visions.

In this drowsiness he was still in imagination watching the storm—as he might have done had he been awake, for his bedroom was high up, and looked on the sea, and he had not drawn down the blind. All at once it seemed to him that a flash of lightning and a short but loud clap of thunder came almost simultaneously. Then another! At the second he was wide awake, and sprang up in bed.

A third came. About this there was no mistake. He could see the flash from his window. But it was not lightning, nor was the roar that followed it thunder. Henry Vorian knew what it was. He was soon hurrying on his clothes. But other eyes and ears in the hotel had noted the flash and report, and before he was quite dressed there was a scuffling to and fro in the passages, and the sound of voices.

It was a vessel driving ashore that had fired the signals of distress, and everybody was on the alert at once.

As he hurried by Honoria's door, he saw that it was open, and beheld her pale face peering round. When she saw him, she cried out, "What is it? What does it all mean? Is the place on fire?"

"No! no! Go to bed again. It is a ship in distress, and we're going to see what is to be done—that's all—don't be alarmed."

"You're not going into danger?" she said, half-timidly, half-imploringly.

"What matter if I am? Good-night!" and he hurried down stairs, and made his way to the beach.

It was a large three-masted vessel, which appeared to have lost its rudder, and to have had its sails blown to ribbons. It was driving rapidly on shore.

There was no time to be lost, but the noisy and demonstrative Frenchmen were losing as much of it as they could.

Luckily, there was a little knot of Englishmen, some landsmen, some sailors, and they were quietly busying themselves in getting out a boat.

"How many of you can row?" asked one of the sailors, who, from the deference paid to him by the others, was probably a lower officer.

Several of the landsmen volunteered, and the sailor chose out the likeliest-looking to make up the crew. Among those he selected was Henry Vorian.

"Pull steady, in Heaven's name, my men—run her down into the surf, and jump in as quickly as you can—in order—bow first. Now then! Ready! Run her down!" But the



sea beat them back, and threw them on the shore, overturning the boat.

They were not to be disheartened, though. Half the crew got in her this time, and had their oars out ready to pull, while the remainder, aided by some of the bystanders, pushed her off.

It was a fierce, sharp struggle ; but they managed this time to get her off.

"Steady, lads! A long stroke, and keep time—put your backs into it, boys!" shouted the old sailor who had taken the helm.

They rowed manfully, though the sea was terribly high, and the boat could hardly be expected to live in it. Not a word was spoken save by the sailor at the helm, who cheered the rowers on, or cautioned them against rowing wildly.

They were near enough to the ship now to see the people clinging to the rigging, and to distinguish the cries with which the sight of the boat was welcomed.

She was breaking up fast. Planks and spars were washed by the boat as she struggled up to the vessel, which was just stranding—bumping-on as every fresh sea lifted her further ashore.

"Now, then, steady, lads, steady. We must take her in very carefully, or we shall be swamped!" said the old sailor.

Just at this moment a floating spar, carried along by a tremendous sea that swept the boat from stem to stern, struck him in the chest and knocked him overboard. The boat, no longer steered to take the seas, swung broadside on. There was a rush to pick up the steersman and take the rudder—and almost at the same moment a monster wave came roaring on and engulfed the boat, full in the sight of the wrecked ship, whence arose a cry of despair and horror at the awful fate which had overtaken those who were coming so gallantly to the rescue.

Only two sailors out of the whole boat's crew reached land.

So perished Henry Vorian!

Of Honoria's distress I need tell you nothing. She was, indeed, half mad with grief, for she felt that she was, to some degree, the cause of his death. It was his consideration for her that had brought him into the peril.

Her distress moved worthy Mr. Gleeson, who, with his wife and family, was returning from a visit to Paris. He was only a grocer, and therefore had no knowledge of the private history of the Vorians. He kindly offered to take charge of

the poor lady who had been so suddenly bereaved—and under such heartrending circumstances. Honoria accepted the offer, and was safe and sound in her mother's cottage, near Richmond, several days before her unfortunate husband's mangled corpse was washed up upon the inhospitable coast.

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## CHAPTER LI.

## THE BLACK-FLOWING RIVER.

WEARILY—very wearily, through heat and cold, through wet and dry—had Marian pursued her quest. Undaunted by failure and undeterred by contempt and derision, she held to her purpose with an undying determination. She *would* find her sister.

How often as she paced the streets, looking wistfully into the poor reddled faces that flitted by, how often had she been led to believe some passing figure was like her sister's. And then with what patient resolution had she tracked that form until her opportunity came, and she went up under the flaring gas to look at the face—and find it was not Alice's.

She became well known to the poor ghosts she haunted, herself a ghost. Pale, dishevelled women were half afraid of her, and shrank from her hungry looks. Some of the more hardened called her "Crazy Jane," and she became known to all the strange inhabitants of the night-side of London by that name. But even the most hardened avoided a meeting with her, if possible—they were all superstitious, these poor creatures, whose first fault had been over-faith, and they shrank terrified from the mystery that surrounded Marian.

"By Jove, there goes that woman again!" languid young men about town used to say when they saw that veiled and shawled figure glide by. They were not capable of deep wonder, or strong enough mentally to try and unravel the secret of that haunting form. They used to solve the mystery with "a midnight meeting party, or something of that sort, you know." Which, after all, was an intellectual effort.

Sometimes she was noticed by some young fellow with a better brain or a warmer heart—some fine lad just passing for a time through the ghastly gas-lit world of midnight, as too many noble natures do, and I trust escape unharmed. It is not their fault so much as the fault of society, that talks

glibly about young men "seeing life." Seeing life! seeing death in life—seeing how much like corpses live men and women can be. Some of these better natures, fallen upon evil times and places, would be seized with the chivalrous notion of learning all about this strange cloaked figure. And then they gave Marian much trouble—they terrified her, for she could hardly be expected to know their motives were honest, finding them where she did. She was less molested by the regular denizens of midnight.

The police knew her by sight pretty well, and affected a complete knowledge of her. When questioned about her, they looked sagacious, and said, "Oh, yes, they knowed her, and what her game was. It warn't no harm; she bought second-hand clothing, and sold it, and retailed brushes, and combs, and soap. A Jewess she was—lived down Houndsditch somewheres."

You see it would never do for the force to appear ignorant of anything—especially in the midnight world, over which they rule as despots, and exercise a ferocious tyranny, which quiet citizens who go to bed at regular hours would hardly believe them capable of. In the central region of midnight they reign by sheer brute force. "I'll lock you up!" is the only argument they condescend to use; and woe betide the chance passenger who, seeing them maltreating some poor creature they have in custody, ventures to expostulate. He finds himself in a police cell before he can think, and learns next morning, to his surprise, that he is a constant frequenter of haunts of vice and intoxication, and bosom companion of the prisoner in the dock. If it were not for this fertility of their invention in the matter of evidence, the police would be the stupidest body of men in England. And if darkness has once closed over London, and the gas is lit, the humane chance passenger will have a bad time of it to prove himself innocent. The lives, property, and characters of those who, from choice or necessity, are out in the streets after dark, are entirely in the power of the police—a body of ill-paid and under-educated men, with a strong instinct to support one another's allegations. This may seem severe; but it is true. A working literary man, especially if he be employed in journalism, is obliged to be about London at all hours, and I have, in my own experience, seen acts of ferocious brutality on the part of the police—and too often exercised towards those poor unfortunates, whose appearance in the inhospitable streets at such hours should have been a reason for pity, not cruelty.

It was lucky, therefore, for Marian that she was looked

upon by the force as a huckster of second-hand wardrobes, and soaps, and sponges. Her quest was set down as a search after some absconding customer who was in her debt; and the recovery of money for goods supplied being a perfectly legal course, the constables did not think of interfering with her.

So Crazy Jane is allowed to go her way unmolested, and pursues her quest night after night for many a long wearisome month. But all in vain!

Day after day she taught at her tiny school, where the children, and perhaps the Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth too, noticed that she had become very tender and solicitous about the big girls who were just leaving school to go into business or service. We know why she took an interest in them. Those who have looked on the world of midnight may well be full of pity for these young creatures sent out alone amid great temptation.

"Teacher" was still very popular with the little people she had to educate. Through them she had come to be known to the fathers and mothers, and they sometimes in their difficulties came to "Teacher" for advice. But all this increased her work; and she was growing thin, and old, and gray, before her time. For instead of getting her natural rest at night, she was pacing the inhospitable miles of gas-lit London, pursuing her quest.

Night after night, until the dawn began to show over the house-tops, she wandered wearily to and fro, seeking the lost one. And then, when the gray light began to broaden, she sought her humble roof, and snatched a few hours of rest, broken by dreams in which she was still journeying after her sister; so that sleep scarcely refreshed her.

At last came the close of autumn. The regular November weather descended on London.

It was a night of thick fog. It had done its best all day to rain through the solid yellow cloud, and had contrived to make the flagstones humid and slimy. The lamps were burning dimly, like the bleared eyes of dissipated monsters that had been up a good many nights running, and were getting rather tired of it. They blinked dismally, as if the fog had got into them and made them sore. It was a nasty, pestilential thing, that fog — a tangible, obtrusive horror. Your hands and face were black with its foul caresses, and the purity of your clean collar perished utterly before you had been out in it a minute.

It made you feel ill, because it made you feel dirty. For just as, when you don't feel very well, the smartening of

yourself up and the putting on of your best clothes gives you a feeling and air of convalescence—I have known a bilious attack entirely cured by a clean shirt and a new cravat—so the sense that in spite of all the attention you could pay to your *toilette*, you were, the instant you emerged into that beastly atmosphere, a begrimed and blackened wretch, took all the moral starch out of you, and you became limp and unwholesome.

There was a continual, consistent drizzle, as if it were raining very hard indeed on the top of the fog, but the drops could only filter and crawl slowly through that dense medium. It choked you. You longed to gasp, but knew that to do so was merely to swallow the abomination wholesale.

There was a dreadful silence about it. The elastic nature of the air seemed gone. If anyone had fired a cannon in the next street, the report would only have come to you as a dull thud, as if somebody were shutting a front door ten paces off. All the roar and rattle of the traffic died into a dull rumble, as the various vehicles, magnified into colossal machines, darkened upon you suddenly through the gloom, and then faded away.

And how cold it was! Not the sharp, biting cold of a frosty, windy day, when the northeaster gives you a rubbing down that sets you aglow again; but the crawling, damp chill that laps you round slowly in its folds, like a horrible snake, freezing the marrow in your bones, and numbing the blood in your veins.

It had been bad enough all day, but the night made it twenty times worse. The thick darkness was made so appreciable by the red blots which stood for lamps. There were no glittering lines of gas. You saw about three red fungoid blotches, differing widely in intensity. As you came near the brightest—or, better, the least dark, it developed into something not unfamiliar—an object between the gas-lamp of ordinary life and the unsnuffed dip. Then it rapidly died out, and the next blot assumed its shape—another small gloomily glowing point dawning on you at the same time. You never got more than the ghosts of three lamps into your field of sight at once. Even the gay, variegated globes at the chemist's were obscured into leprous blotches and diseased flushes, suggestive of blood, jaundice, verdigris, and blue-mould.

But the worst place of all, the part of London where the fog seemed to reign without dispute—was the river.

Inky black and sluggish, a very Lethe, the dark, seemingly motionless, flood spread away beneath you as you looked over

the bridges. No reflected lights danced on its bosom. Gleaming window and glaring lamp were blotted out.

What a night for a suicide! What a night for some poor creature, wearied out of existence, to take that fatal plunge which now—with that dim, vapour-wrapt deep beneath—would seem like a leap into futurity!

And such a poor wretch there was upon Waterloo Bridge that night. The sordid, dripping bundle of rags in one of the recesses was a woman, cowered on the dank stones, passing through the agony of dissolution, suffering the pangs of separation, without which there is no death, wilful or natural. For the unhappy being who attempts violently to wrench himself from life, goes through all the long farewells, the regrets, the remorse, the sorrows, which we are prone to believe are gathered in review around the death-bed only. While the hand is raising the hasty knife, while the hurried foot is climbing the parapet, while the trembling finger is drawing the trigger, be sure that inexorable memory reveals at a glance the panorama of the past, and condenses hours of grief into the death-spasm of an instant.

Tottering painfully—groping as if smitten with blindness—possibly smitten with the blindness of bitter tears—the miserable woman rises from the hard flag-stones and leans over the chilly, dripping parapet. Darkness below—the lapping of the water at the buttresses of the bridge is almost inaudible—so dull and heavy is the atmosphere. The broad, silent stream seems so deep and inscrutable that the poor heart almost dares to hope it might suck one unnoticed corpse into its inky jaws, out of the sight even of heaven, to utter oblivion and complete annihilation.

She bends backwards for one moment to listen. It is all so very quiet. The fog hushes all. No fear of the plunge being heard!

Then she mounts the stone seat with uncertain steps, and planting one foot on the parapet, looks up—one long, last appealing look towards heaven.

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“It is a wretched night to welcome once back to Old England,” thought James Trefusis, as he came away shivering from the railway station, after a long and stormy voyage across the Bay of Biscay.

He has been tormented into returning home by the authorities at the Ordnance Office, now the Ordnance Office no longer, but budding afresh—with all its old imperfections

considerably strengthened by transplanting—under a new name. The authorities have been just as persistent in worrying him for the Trefusis gun as they had formerly been in declining to give it a trial. But when they had let loose Mr. Ledbitter at him twice, and wrote, threatening a third infliction, James gave in, and made up his mind to come back to England. He is quite well and strong now, so the rough passage does him no harm, nor does he care much for the peculiarly English weather which welcomes him back to his native land.

"I'll walk instead of taking a hansom," says he to himself, "and see if I can't stir up my circulation. I'm regularly damped through with the fog, and washed out with the journey."

So he strides out of the station.

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It is hardly to be wondered at that Marian in the gloom and uncertainty of such a night as this should pursue several vain shadows; and she has been so intent upon the figure she fondly believed to be Alice's in each case, that she has wondered she scarcely knows whither. At last she finds herself by the river side, and can see looming dark through the fog on her left a bridge. In answer to her inquiries, a man, who is smoking a pipe on board a lighter, moored alongside of the wharf to which she has come astray, tells her it is Waterloo Bridge.

The place seems so strange to her that she becomes impressed with the idea that she must be somewhere on the Surrey side of the water. She is so strongly impressed with this notion that she makes her way at once towards the bridge with the intention of crossing it.

It is more bitterly cold than ever on the bridge. She wraps her shawl closely round her and hurries across. As she reaches the middle arch, and is gliding hastily, noiselessly past it, she sees the flutter of a dress. She looks up and sees a woman standing on the parapet, just about to leap into the river.

In an instant she has sprung to her, caught her round the waist, and dragged her back. The poor wretch is weak, but struggles desperately.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

At that voice Marian is seized with a fearful faintness. There is a lamp close by. She staggers to it, half carrying, half dragging the intended suicide with her.

"Alice! Alice! at last!" is the great cry that breaks from her as the feeble rays fall upon the pale, worn features before her.

"You, Marian? Oh, let me go, then! Let me go!"

And the unhappy girl struggles madly, and almost breaks away from the encircling arms.

Marian feels her strength failing. "Together, then, Alice," she gasps, for she feels she cannot hold the other back much longer.

But just at this moment a violent fit of coughing deprives Alice of all power of resistance. She becomes a dead weight in the arms of Marian, who, too weak to sustain her, sinks on the pavement, holding her sister's head on her lap, and wiping away the blood-tinged foam that soon gathers on her lips.

Can anyone tell where a London crowd comes from? In another minute Marian looks up, and finds herself surrounded by curious spectators. There is a policeman among them.

"Drunk again, eh? And *you* aint much better," is his feeling remark.

But before he has time to take any further steps to assert his position, he is thrust aside by a gentleman who has just come up.

It is James Trefusis, walking — how providentially! — from the station. He recognises Marian, and sees all at a glance.

"Go and fetch a cab," he says to a bystander, and he says it with such an air of authority that the man runs off at once, and is back with the vehicle before the constable has had time to collect his rudely scattered senses.

As soon as the cab arrives, James lifts Alice into it, and then assists Marian in.

"I say, who are you?" the policeman has just recovered enough self-possession to inquire. "You're interfering with the police in the execution of their duty. If you don't take care, I'll lock you up."

"Stand back," says James angrily, preparing to mount the box. "Drive on, cabman."

"I'll take your number, and summons you if you do," says the constable; and the cabman, knowing the power of the police, does not dare to drive on.

The cabman thus failing him, James is compelled to adopt different tactics. He gets down from the box and approaches the policeman.

"Don't you see, we don't want any disturbance? The young



woman is mad, and has escaped from the asylum, and the nurse and myself have been looking for her, and have only just found her." Here something, an object held between James's thumb and-forefinger, touches the inside of the policeman's Berlin glove. That functionary, whose sense of touch is very acute—so acute that he is quite sure, in spite of the intervention of the thick glove, that the object is half-a-crown, and not a florin—says immediately, with a sudden advent of intelligence, "Ah, yes. I guessed as much. It's all right, Sir. You can drive on, cabby. Good-night, Sir."

So the cab drives off, and the crowd disperses, much edified, no doubt, by the manner in which individual constables administer the law.

And the night comes down darker and denser, and all through it Marian, kneeling by the bed, watches her sister—still with that strange feeling, which she cannot get rid of, that Alice is very much older than she.

James had seen them to the door, and waited until they were safely in charge of Mrs. Warner, whose stony gray eyes were over-running with tears. Then James imprinted one kiss on Marian's thin wasted hand, and left the women together.

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## CHAPTER LII.

### SEEKING VENGEANCE.

THE day after the finding of Alice, James Trefusis comes, by the invitation of Mrs. Warner, to see Marian and inquire after her sister. And from that day he becomes a pretty constant visitor, for he is not in the way, and will run on any errands, and becomes, in fact, that most useful compound, half nurse, half porter, which only a strong man, with a big heart full of love, can be.

For many days they move about the house with the hushed step which is so terribly significant of death's vicinage. Marian and Mrs. Warner, however, will not acknowledge the grim neighbour any further. They fight him resolutely. Sleep and rest they despise — watching hourly, almost momentarily, by the bedside, anticipating every want, and alleviating every throe, for Alice is terribly ill. She lies propped with pillows, scarcely conscious—a mere skeleton,

with a great red spot on each sunken cheek, and all the veins starting and swelling under the pale clammy skin.

They send for a doctor. He is a clever man ; but he shakes his head when he sees his patient, and there comes into his face that expression which those who have learnt by many sick-beds to study the countenances of doctors cannot mistake. But he does not despair—that is a thing he never dreams of. He feels the struggle is a little unequal, and that the enemy has had a long start of him ; but that only makes him go into the contest with the greater determination.

In a wonderfully short time, considering the case, he has strengthened and restored his patient considerably ; but a close observer might have noted that the expression I have spoken of had not passed away. Marian, however, and Mrs. Warner have grown quite hopeful. James shares their pleasure at Alice's probable recovery. And now that the crisis seems past, James Trefusis speaks to Marian once more.

"My own, she is found now, and the trials and troubles are all past. Be my wife now, Marian."

"I must never leave her, James."

"Do you think I could ask you?"

"No, James, no. But it must not be—it cannot be. What wife would they call me, bringing you no dowry but shame?"

"No, no, Marian. They cannot say it. It would be a lie."

"It would be too true. And she can never really be well and strong again, the doctor says, but will require constant attendance. How could I be your wife without neglecting her, or her nurse without neglecting you? I tell you, James dear, it can never be. We must bear our lot as we best may, for it cannot be otherwise."

"Let us be man and wife, Marian, and we'll watch and tend our sister—oh, how lovingly!—down yonder in that quiet Cornish home of ours. It will be fresh life to her to breathe the dear old air again."

"You do not doubt that I love you, James?" asks Marian, coming up to him, putting her hands in his, and looking him frankly in the eyes.

"Never, my own ;" and he kisses her lips unreprieved.

"Then never doubt me, and always love me—if you can love the poor, faded old woman I am. But don't ask me to be your wife any more, James, for I cannot. How could I meet my father if I forgot this charge? I fear sometimes that all this is my blame—that I might have saved her"—she trembled and clung to him—"and it terrifies me so to think it, dear—it almost breaks my heart ; and oh! I must never, never again leave her for a moment. Oh, father, father, forgive your poor

child! Oh, James, give me your love, and pity, and sympathy, for I need it sorely."

"Take comfort, Marian. You are not to blame in this, my poor child. What were you to do, stretched on your fever-bed?"

"No—not then. But I ought to have guarded against any possibility of ill. Oh, James, you don't know what such a charge is, and how terribly one suffers for any neglect or oversight. Only—thank Heaven!—I have found her again."

"Give me reason to thank Heaven, too—oh, dearest, and only love——"

"Hush! It cannot be. *I dare not!*" And she placed her hand on his lips.

He could not but see how bitterly her heart was torn to refuse him. He pressed her hand to his lips in one long kiss, and sighed to think that the one vision of his life was as far from him as ever.

But he could not refrain from returning to the subject again and again. He besought her for pity's sake to be his wife—for the sake of her sister, who should be his sister. But she would not listen to his entreaties.

She could not divest her mind of the belief that she might have averted the evil which had befallen Alice. Nothing could convince her that she had not in some way neglected the solemn charge which devolved upon her at her father's death.

In vain poor Mrs. Warner exercised all her homely logic in pleading James's cause. She could prosper little. And what defeated them both was Marian's honest avowal of her love for James.

"I shall never know what happiness is except as his wife, Mrs. Warner, and yet I know that cannot be. Duty is stronger than love, and if it breaks my heart, I must obey my conscience. And my conscience tells me, too, that if I loved him, I should not bring the blemish of this shame as my wedding portion. I know he is too noble and too good to care for it himself; but I must think of him, and I know how such a disgrace would be told to his discredit in the world. No man who rises as he has done by his own merit is without enemies, and is it for me to supply them with stones to hurl at his fair name? It's breaking my heart, Mrs. Warner; and you're breaking it the faster to make me talk about it. But I tell you it must not and cannot be!"

And Mrs. Warner felt it was useless to argue with her any longer. Indeed, she felt that what Marian said about the use James's enemies might make of poor Alice's misery was too serious to be set aside lightly. She had lived long enough in

the world to know how ready a man's foes are to stab him in the back, and distort a story that should be to his honour into a means of disgracing him.

Dreary, dark November was drawing to an end. All through the weary weeks the doctor and death had been fighting a sharp battle over the patient's bed. Alice was seemingly better and stronger, but the doctor's expression had not worn away yet. Indeed, his anxiety was becoming more intense, for just as he was making a little way, the winter was coming on to undo all his work. For Alice's lungs were affected, and the weather-wise prophesied a bitterly cold December; and the doctor trembled for his patient.

December came; and for once the weather-wise were not out in their calculations. It opened with a bitter, black frost, that killed at once any lingering remnants of summer that had escaped the November fogs. When Marian or Mrs. Warner—for they took it by turns to sit up with the invalid now—used to steal across the room in the early dawn and look out of the window, the panes would be covered with the fantastic tracery of frost, and all the moisture of the night would glitter, transformed into miniature diamonds, on the window ledge and the flower pots. The roads even looked white sometimes, as if there had been a fall of snow.

Then Alice began to fade again, and her cough grew more hollow. They all trembled at the sound of it, it seemed to shake her poor frail body so terribly. There was no being blind to the anxiety in the good doctor's face now.

"What do you think, doctor?" said Marian in a whisper.

"We must take care, Miss Carlyle. Do you think you could bear travelling?" he said, turning and speaking very gently to Alice.

"I feel very weak," was all she could murmur.

"I think we ought to send her to Madeira; at all events to a warmer climate."

Mrs. Warner was showing him out as he said this, and he had nearly reached the door, which opened into the sitting-room where James Trefusis was waiting to hear his opinion of the invalid. Marian was sitting by Alice's bedside, with the poor bony hand clasped in hers.

"You think a warmer climate advisable, doctor? What do you say to Cornwall? I have long wished Miss Carlyle to accept a comfortable house in a snug valley in that delightful county. I have placed it at her disposal for some considerable period, but she does not avail herself of my offer."

The doctor turned to Marian as he stood in the doorway.

"It would be just the thing. I fear she could hardly bear

the sea-passage, and she might be taken to Cornwall very easily. Pray go."

He spoke very earnestly. James had hardly made the proposal seriously, but was taking advantage of the opportunity to urge his suit. But the doctor evidently thought very highly of the suggestion.

"If you think so, doctor," said Marian, "and Mr. Trefusis will lend"—a slight emphasis on lend—"me the house for a time, we will go there. When should we start?"

"As soon as possible."

"But the house is not ready for habitation, perhaps?"

"It soon shall be, though," said James. "I'll go to Totting, my lawyer, this very moment, and order him to turn that scamp Cormack out at any cost, without a moment's delay."

"Stop!" said Marian hastily, in a strange tone of voice, from her seat by the bedside. "Don't go until I have seen you. Good-bye, doctor. Just leave us a moment, Mrs. Warner, and close the door!"

Marian had felt Alice shudder at the mention of Cormack's name, and a terrible suspicion had risen in her mind. She had never asked her sister for the story of her sufferings and shame; but now she must ask that one question.

What passed in that closed chamber, when the two sisters were left together alone, what need to tell? Indeed it would be beyond my poor power to describe the harrowing scene. For then and there, unasked, as soon as the door was shut, Alice poured forth the long tale of her wrong and misery; and the two wept on each other's shoulders, and mourned and prayed.

All this time James Trefusis sat in the next room wondering what had chanced and what was to happen. He felt that it must have been something very strange that had made Marian speak as she did. He could hear the two sisters sobbing now, and he began vaguely to discern what was coming.

Presently the door opened, and Marian, with a face as white as a ghost's, came in. She sank into a chair by his side, buried her face in her hands, and remained silent for a minute or so. At last, in a low, gasping voice, she repeated to him what she had just learnt from Alice.

When she finished her recital, she looked up and then shrank back, terrified at the fury she saw in James's face.

He rose from his chair without speaking a word, snatched up his hat, and taking his stick with a fierce grip as if he were clutching some one by the throat, hissed out, "Cormack shall suffer for this, if I live, by God!" And the imprecation was pardonable if ever one was, for his heart was bursting, and he was terribly—solemnly in earnest.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### HOW THEY PUT THE ENGINE TO WORK AT WHEAL CORMACK.

CAPTAIN TREGENNA is up and stirring with the first streak of day. It is not the nicest time of year to set the engine to work, but Cormack will not wait till the spring. It is arranged that large bonfires shall be lighted if the weather is too cold. But it never is very cold, even on the moors, in Cornwall, lying, as it does, an isthmus between two vast bodies of water, and with the Gulf Stream almost washing its western promontory.

It appears as if the weather had specially favoured Wheal Cormack. The anxious eyes of Captain Tregenna, watching the chill dawn, detect certain yellow rays that foretell the sun ; and presently that luminary rises, and sheds almost summer warmth on the scene. It is a splendid morning. How lovely the moorland looks stretching away on all sides, with here and there a trail of vapour lingering by some stream or over a hollow.

Beyond all is the pale blue sky, where the sun is climbing, red through the mists—but not so red as to portend a bad day. Captain Tregenna is delighted beyond measure. He had been so afraid something must occur to mar the great event of his life. The weather had been very unsettled of late, and he would have been little surprised if the dawn had broken luridly through curtains of rain. He had quite expected it, in fact, and had wondered whether the tents would keep out the wet, or whether the showers would be so heavy as to extinguish the fires.

All the village is on the move early, for the men have to help in making preparations for the reception of the guests. There must be stables extemporised in the workshops, and some sort of covering for the gigs and coaches in case it should rain. And those who have no work to do go to look on ; and the women loiter about, ready to make themselves generally useful.

There is the putting up of evergreens, and the washing of all the plates, dishes, knives and forks that can be collected for the occasion ; and there is cooking on a large scale. How busy they all are !

Wheal Cormack resembles nothing so much as an ants' nest,

the interior workings of which have been suddenly revealed by a chance footstep. There is an apparently aimless rushing to and fro, and eventual harmony and order emerging unexpectedly from chaos.

Henry Cormack comes over early to see how affairs are progressing, and he and Captain Tregenna are as jolly as sand-boys, all is going so well.

The chief object of all this bustle meanwhile stands calm and stationary. The tall white engine-house, with the black beam of the engine thrust out like a giant arm, is motionless and deserted by all save the engineer, who is engaged inside furbishing up the brass, or wiping the rods of his charge with little bits of oily rag—taking that peculiar affectionate delight in retouching and finishing off that a young husband takes in setting his wife's bonnet ribbon aright, or altering the folds of her shawl.

The engine-house is a tall rectangular building, with a lofty chimney. It is built with one floor, beneath which there are odd nooks and corners for stowage away of engineering odds and ends. From this floor to the roof the interior is occupied by the engine, one end of the beam—that which works the pumps in the shaft—protruding through an opening at the back of the building. Above this opening is a half-deck sort of floor, with a gallery outside, reached from the interior by a set of steps, which is something more than a ladder, and something less than a flight of stairs.

To the traveller in the mining districts, these engine-houses present a curious sight at night. The engines are always at work, and as you see one of these buildings looming dark against the midnight sky, with the great beam plunging and rising incessantly, it is almost impossible to avoid thinking of them as living creatures. They do their work so quietly when apparently all human labour has gone to rest. They seem like huge giants working at some vast sawpit.

The giant of Wheal Cormack was a sleeping giant as yet. The first downthrust of his arm on this day was to be the signal for great rejoicing; and when once he had fairly begun his monotonous labour, the good speed of the mine was to be a certainty. No wonder that so many anxious looks were turned to the engine-house this morning.

The guests are beginning to arrive. They have come long distances for the most part. But in this country, whither the railway has not yet brought a distinct estimate of distance, people think nothing of driving twenty miles to dinner—and over such roads! It will be a miracle, supposing the night turns out a little dark, and the sitting late and merry, if half

of these people get home without something like an accident. For some part of the way they have to drive over the turf, for there is no road across the moor to the mine except that used by the ore waggons, and that is ploughed into ruts as big as young rivers. And the turf of the moor is not like the turf of a bowling-green.

There are great ledges and reefs and bowlers of granite sprinkled about it, and there are plenty of holes where they have been digging for gravel or water, or where some one has been prospecting. It must do old Doctor John's heart good, as he jogs over to the feast on his old white horse, to see what odds there are in favour of an inquest. He is safe enough. He knows every inch of the moors, drunk or sober—that is to say, in the former case the old horse knows what he is about, and will carry him home all right.

It is a very miscellaneous collection of vehicles. Flies, dog-carts—not many of those, though—gigs, buggies, carts, and covered vans. And the horses are remarkable for a similar variety. There is the squircen's clever hack, and the mining captain's broken-kneed nag, and the post horse, and the plough horse, and the horse that is only fit for the knacker's.

And if the vehicles and animals must be exonerated from the charge of a monotonous sameness, their owners or hirers—as the case may be—are just as heterogeneous an assemblage. Everybody who had ever dabbled in mines—and who had not? at all events, everybody who might dabble in mines—and who might not?—had been invited to be present. And very few who were invited failed to come; even some who were not invited asked themselves.

There is a little body of grandees—the mining aristocracy—to whom Captain Tregenna and Cormack pay deferential attention, and no one feels the least hurt or jealous at the preference so displayed. The fortunate speculators are the representative men of the class assembled here. There is no man in the throng who may not, and does not hope, to arrive at the same pinnacle of eminence. Each one, therefore, respects a position which he dreams he may some day acquire for himself.

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What scheme of retribution James Trefusis proposed to himself when he left London with the intention of calling Cormack to account, I do not know. He probably did not know himself. His was the instinctive impulse to punish, and he hurried out of Marian's presence, and set forth westward without a moment's delay.



As the railway bore him along to Plymouth, he did not reflect on what course he should take. He simply revelled in the speed with which steam was taking him to the man he so hated.

From Plymouth he went on by the mail. What a delicious mode of travelling it was!—with four sturdy gray nags stepping out gloriously, and the guard's bugle waking the echoes! The jingle and rattle of the chains and swingle-bars made pleasant music, and how freshly the air rushed against the face! James enjoyed the speed here too, and checked off the mile-stones as they passed, thinking how rapidly his road was shortening—never thinking what he should do when his journey was accomplished.

At last the mail stops to change at the town whence James must post to Polvrehan. It is a quiet little country town, some eight miles from Polvrehan—but it seems more than ordinarily quiet to-day. James goes to The Bell to ask for a conveyance.

"Can I have a trap to——"

"Go over to Cap'n Cormack's?" says the ostler; "not for love nor money, Sir."

This startles James for a moment. How can the man guess his destination so readily? But the continuation of the ostler's speech explains it.

"If you'd a-come by the morning mail, you might ha' had a seat along with some of the others. There was one to spare in Mr. Cargill's fly. Know Mr. Cargill, Sir?"

"No, he does not," James says.

"Ah! But I dare say it wouldn't a-mattered, you being a friend of Cap'n Cormack, and invited, you see, Sir—and I s'pose come from London a-purpose."

"On purpose for what?" James asks.

"Oh, I thought as you was going over to the dinner at Wheal Cormack to-day, Sir. They're putting the new engine to work, Sir. And a'most everyone's invited, and I don't believe there's a horse and trap left in the place."

Still, without reflecting how he should visit Cormack with his revenge, James feels that this opportunity—this hour of his triumph—is the time to take advantage of. He asks, "Is there no saddle horse to be had?" The ostler says, "Yes; but that, as the gentleman probably doesn't know his way across the moors, that wouldn't be much use."

James assures him he need not trouble about that; he knows all the moors about Polvrehan very well, and tells him to saddle the horse and bring it round.

As he waits on the steps of the hotel, his attention is attracted

by a saddler's window on the other side of the road. He crosses over, and, after looking in for a short time, goes in, and buys a heavy hunting-crop—a tremendous weapon, with a hammer-head.

By the time he has completed his purchase he hears the clatter of hoofs outside, and sees his horse being brought round. So he goes out; mounts, and rides off to the moors.

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Captain Tregenna and Henry Cormack are pointing out what a view there is from the gallery of the engine-house to a little knot of guests. They are waiting for the first movement of the engine.

It comes at last. The heavy beam oscillates for a moment, and then gives a downward plunge. There is a loud cheer. The beam rises again, and the rush of water in the launder (or channel from the pumps) tells that all works well.

"You're a little late, Sir, whoever you are," says Cormack, as, looking away from the now steadily-working beam, he happens to catch sight of some one spurring across the moor towards the mine.

Bump!

One or two of the guests who have not been present on occasions of this sort look alarmed, and hurry down stairs, to the great amusement of the others, who know the meaning of the blow that made the engine-house shake.

It is the custom, when starting an engine for the first time, to play off this mild practical joke. The engineer "brings her home," as he calls it—that is, he lets the upward stroke of the beam continue until it strikes against the floor and gallery with a bang that startles the new comers, and affords considerable amusement to the old stagers.

"Bring her home again, lad," says the stoker.

"Aye, be sure," says the engineer.

Bang! goes the engine, and the whole place quivers at the blow.

One or two of the old stagers begin to think the house is a little shaky. Some few of them know how lightly it has been run up, so there is a quiet move towards the stairs. Tregenna sees it, and begins to joke about it. The others hesitate, and the captain, slipping by, runs down to the engineer, and tells him to "bring her home again!"

"Bang! a third time. A slate falls off the roof, and goes down outside with a crash, and some of the mortar falls rattling on the floor. The knot of guests up stairs don't delay now.

They hustle each other most unceremoniously in their hurry to get out of the building. Cormack laughs at them, but he does not feel comfortable. As soon as they are outside, he goes to the side of the half-deck floor, whence he can see Tregenna, and shouts out, "Stop that infernal nonsense, Tregenna! Don't be a fool!"

But Tregenna had noticed nothing of the causes that sent the alarmed guests helter-skelter, and he is so intensely enjoying the joke that he has told the engineer to bring her home with a will once more.

Bang! At the same moment Tregenna hears Cormack's shout. He looks up. There is a crash and a dull rattle, and then the roof overhead suddenly yawns. It is all the work of a second. The engineer catches Tregenna by the arm, and drags him away through the door after the stoker, who fled at the first crash.

They are standing in the open air. There's a hollow rumbling and a cloud of dust. Then Tregenna is aware of the figure of the stoker struggling up from the ground.

He has been felled by a falling beam. Then he becomes conscious that he himself must have been struck by something on the left shoulder, for there is a sharp pain there, and he can't lift his arm.

What has happened? He is all confused, everything has passed so rapidly. He turns to look at the engine-house. It is gone. A cloud of dust is clearing away from a pile of stones and timbers, from the midst of which the engine-shaft rises, apparently uninjured, the beam still working, crushing up and down through the *débris*. Where is Cormack? He must be buried under the ruins.

"Come on, lads; we must get him out. Captain Cormack's buried in you," he cries, shaking off his stupor.

He is about to spring forward; but a hand is laid on his shoulder. It is the engineer, who points to the tall chimney. There is a great gap at the bottom, where the brick work has been torn down by the fall of the rest of the building. It looks as if the lofty shaft must fall at a breath of wind. It seems actually to totter as the beam—the steam not having been turned off by the engineer in his hurry—still crashes up and down in the ruins.

The peril is evident. No one dares to approach the ruins, for fear of the fall of the chimney. A dense ring gathers round the spot, but no one ventures within the circle, though every one is shouting, and ordering, and advising.

And what had all this seemed like to James Trefusis as he galloped across the moors?

He had seen the beam move, and heard the shout, and pushed on. The something—he never could explain what, whether sight or sound—attracted his attention again; and then he beheld the heap of ruins, and the smoke of dust blowing away. He believed it was an explosion, but could not make out clearly. At any rate it was an accident, and a terrible one. For a time he forgot altogether the real cause of his coming, but spurred on with the instinct of a brave heart to go and offer aid under such a calamity.

In a few minutes he was bursting through the ring. One or two shouted out a warning to him that the chimney was likely to fall, but he took no heed. First of all he scrambled over the ruins, and thrust aside timber and rolled away stone with a fierce energy like a madman, until he could get at the engine to turn off the steam.

There were plenty of brave fellows in the crowd who only needed this amount of leading and example to make them face the danger without flinching. In another minute James was directing the operations of a dozen or more sturdy miners.

Nobody seemed to know how many were buried in the ruins, but they were not very extensive, and could be easily searched, provided the chimney did not fall. They toiled away with a will.

"There's an arm," cried somebody; and James was at the place in a minute, and an arm sure enough it was.

"Now carefully, lads. I'll get him out as gently as I can, if you'll remove the stone-work and that beam there. Carefully—take the stones off the top first. Gently! Now, heave the beam—hold it up like that a bit, and I can ease him out." So shouted James, as, with the aid of Tregenna, he tenderly drew the man out of the ruins. He was lying on his face, with the beam across his back. As they lifted the balk, James took him in his arms, and drew him out.

It was Cormack!

It was the man on whom James had vowed to be avenged. James Trefusis had him in his arms now—lifeless, motionless. And yet James Trefusis was actually trying anxiously to discover some signs of life in him, to find some hope of his return to consciousness. What strange creatures we are!

There's another warning shout now. The miners leap away, and Tregenna scrambles after them. James cannot, for Cormack lies a dead weight in his arms, and with such a burden, his footing on the ruins would be precarious. He looks up. It seems as if the tall chimney were curling over him. It falls; but fortunately it falls some yards on his left, so that,

though he is struck by falling stones and flying rubbish, he escapes unhurt.

He carries the body of Cormack into the tent, and it is laid on the rough deal table at the head, which happens to be the nearest end to the engine-house. It was where the dead man would have sat, and where that famous speech of his was to have been made.

There are no speeches now, and the dinner is a mere necessary devouring of food by men who have come twenty miles from home. They must have something to eat—so they crowd into the lower end of the tent, so far away as possible from the cross table at the head. They snatch a hasty mouthful, and then traps are ordered out, and the party separates.

Doctor Johns has examined the body. Life is extinct. Cormack must have been killed almost instantaneously. The doctor is rather angry at this, for he would have had to attend Cormack if he had survived, and he feels done out of a patient as well as a dinner. So he drinks as much gin and water as he can with his hasty meal, and rides off home, disappointed, but not uncomfortable.

This was the day of Cormack's triumph—this was the day for James's revenge. And where was Cormack's triumph now? and what of James's revenge? Truly man proposes, but God disposes!

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## CHAPTER LIV.

### AFTER STORM, CALM.

WHEN James returns to London, he finds that Alice has suddenly become worse, and is, in fact, as the doctor confesses to him, sinking fast.

He tells Marian this, but she still hopes that her sister may be spared. She tells Alice the story of Cormack's death as James told it to her.

"We all want to be forgiven, Marian, don't we?" says Alice.

"Much, darling, much," groans Marian, who, as we know, cannot forgive herself the evil which has befallen her sister.

"I forgive him. Will you?"

"Never! I cannot," says Marian, fiercely.

"Look at James, Marian. He would have saved his life if he could."

"No," says James, who has been sitting in the gloom on

the other side of the bed. "I did not know who it was until I drew him out of the ruins."

"But you would have done the same if you had known."

"I can't tell. I do not know. I went there perhaps to kill him myself."

"Thank Heaven you were not in time. Haven't I sins enough to answer for already?"

"Alice, darling Alice, you must not talk so," says Marian, who knows that the doctor has forbidden Alice to speak much.

"I must and will talk," says Alice vehemently, "for I see you are breaking James's heart, and all for me—wicked, bad me, that ought to be dead. Why didn't you let me die? There, I will speak," she says, sitting up and thrusting away Marian, who wishes to silence her. "I have lain here day and night thinking of it. You are breaking his heart, Marian, all because of me, and it makes me long to die."

Marian does not speak; she leans her head on her clasped hands, and weeps bitterly. She cannot tell Alice that what she says is not true—she cannot say that even were Alice herself dead, she could not consent to become James's wife because the shame would not be dead.

"Alice," says James, in a strange hollow voice, "neither you nor I can turn her. And if she does break my heart, it is hers, and has been ever since I was a lad. You must not make yourself unhappy because you think it is owing to your being here ill like this. We must all bear our bitter trials in this world, and this one is mine."

"But yours won't be the only heart that will break. Isn't hers breaking, too, James? Why, when I've been lying here, and she has thought me asleep, I have been watching her face—and if her heart is not breaking, never believe me, James; and I know what breaking hearts are, for I have seen them breaking many a time. Oh, James, save her from herself, and let me die in peace."

The strange feeling, that Alice was older than she was, came very strongly over Marian now. Once she had been used to pet and chide her sister—to regard her as a child. Now she listened to her sadly, solemnly, as to a woman. But still she remained firm to her purpose, though Alice renewed her entreaties again and again, while poor James sat by silent—but with a sad, grave face, whose eloquence was so touching and so hard to disregard.

Alice grew weaker and thinner every day. And her sufferings grew very terrible. But as the end drew near she was more peaceful in mind, for at first she had been almost

frenzied with the horror of death—the death which she was seeking when Marian found her. Death had seemed a friend holding out his arms to her as she took the plunge from the dark bridge. Seated by her bedside, with his cold hand creeping quietly towards her heart, he seemed a cruel torturer. But in reality he was then her best friend ; in the end she came to recognise him as such.

“Will it be long, doctor?” she began to ask. And the doctor would shake his head, and take her hand kindly.

“I’ve only one thing more to wish in the world, and then I could die happy, doctor. I might have that wish, might I not?”

“What is it?”

“Oh, it’s a promise I want my sister to make. And she won’t make it, and I lie awake longing to hear her say ‘Yes.’ She might, might she not, doctor?”

Alice repeated this so often that the doctor thought it worth his while to tell Marian.

“She will suffer fearfully before she dies—I mean physical pain, and so we must spare her all the mental agony we can. I don’t know what this request is, but I suppose it is not a mere trifle, or you wouldn’t refuse. But pray, Miss Carlyle, see and think if you can’t grant her request, for it is really preying on her mind.”

But Marian shook her head, and said, “Impossible.”

Still Alice’s importunities became so earnest that the doctor was obliged to speak to James ; and James, in his turn, held a consultation with Mrs. Warner. That worthy woman had a keen judgment, and to her, moreover, Marian’s confidences had been more unreserved. She gave it as her decided opinion that there was only one insurmountable barrier between Marian and James. The determination that she would not bring James the dowry of her sister’s shame as her only dowry in the world, was strong and insuperable ; all others might be overcome. And Mrs. Warner owned that she felt such an argument was not to be slighted, and she respected Marian’s firmness on the point. James was a man whose position before the public would be assailed in every way by those who had failed where he had succeeded ; it would not be the part of a true wife to supply his enemies with weapons to injure him with.

James laughed at this reasoning, but he saw that Mrs. Warner was only repeating what was deeply rooted in Marian’s mind.

“If that’s all, I can remove that difficulty with great ease,” he said, and smiled. But the smile was not without sadness, for the sacrifice he was about to make was no slight one.

He had always taken a father's pride and interest in his invention. He had been constant to it in the days of its neglect, and he had become ardently attached to it now, and happy in its success. There was the natural pride of a man who has fought a long losing game, but has become victorious eventually by sheer pluck and self-reliance. He had worked and won, and the triumph was very pleasant to him. He was human—and, therefore, one ought not to be surprised that he found it delightful to have the men who had slighted and insulted him now seeking him, cap in hand.

But this must all go now. He relinquished it—but not without a sigh.

A few evenings after his conversation with Mrs. Warner, he and Marian are sitting by Alice's bed—one on each side. She is going very fast now, and her sufferings are so acute that she cannot sleep, but lies moaning uneasily.

"Give me your hand, Min—and yours, James!"

They each give her a hand, and she lies quite still for a little while. Then she says, "How dark it is! Oh, I do dread the long, dark night! When will it be morning?"

James tells her it will not be dawn for some hours; at which she sighs.

"Marian, I wish I might lay your hand in James's, and leave it there—leave it there for ever."

"Oh, hush, Alice, darling! It only makes us all unhappy, and it must not be."

"I'm going to leave you, Marian; won't you grant me this, for my peace?"

"I dare not!"

There is silence again for some time, and then Alice moans: "Oh, these weary, weary nights. How dark it is! Oh, for daylight—or sleep. Min, I could sleep better—I could sleep now—and I do so want to sleep—if I might join these hands."

But Marian shakes her head, sobbing bitterly.

"Listen, Marian, dearest," says James, in a low voice, as if not to disturb Alice, "would you marry me if I were a poor man again?"

"What use is it to ask that? This is idle talking, James."

"No, Marian, it is not idle talking. If I, James Trefusis, were the working man I was many years back, with nothing to rely upon but my sinews and my brains—a man going out to work his humble way in a new world, needing a wife to help and comfort him—would you say me no, Marian?"

"But it is not so; it cannot be so. If it were, you would not doubt my love—and yet I fear I might not be your wife."

"Not if I were going to a new country, where all would be



strangers to us—a new country where we should be hundreds of miles from our nearest neighbours ? ”

“What do you mean ? ” asks Marian.

“If I were going to Australia, then, a poor labourer who has bought a little bit of land and is going to settle on it, would you share my lot, or would you let me go out a lonely, friendless man, to grow gray in the solitudes, with no recollections of happy days—only a sad memory of one I loved——”

“And who loved you ! ” Alice broke in, softly.

“Am I dreaming, or is there some meaning in this ? ” Marian asks, faintly.

“Would you be my wife then ? Answer only in that one short word—yes or no.”

“Yes ! ”

“Then Alice may lay your hand in mine for ever, dear wife, for I am that poor working man, going out to settle in Australia.”

Alice clasped the two hands together, and raising them to her lips, kissed them with a long sigh of relief.

James explained that he had made over his invention to the old Captain of Artillery, to whom its origination was chiefly due, and that he had invested all his money in some land in Australia, which he intended to reclaim and cultivate himself.

There was great peace and a calm of happiness in that dark chamber.

“I shall be able to sleep now,” said Alice. “Oh, Marian, this has filled my heart with comfort. Thank Heaven ! I shall be able to sleep now.”

“Poor child,” said James, “I hope you may, for you need rest.”

“Oh, I feel I can sleep now—only let me hold your hands together like this. Kiss me, Marian.”

Marian leant over and kissed her. Then they sat quite quiet, and listened to her breathing, which gradually became more regular, as if sleep were at last really coming to refresh her.

James and Marian sat thus for a long time. They did not need to speak, for they were communing in thought. Hand in hand, at last, plighted man and wife, whom nothing could part now, they sat in a waking dream of perfect content and peace. The only drop of bitterness in their cup was the certainty that poor Alice was dying, and that the path to their wedding lay across her grave.

They thought she was asleep, but presently she began to moan again :

“Oh, this weary, weary darkness ! When will it be light ? ”

"Presently, darling; have patience."

She lay quiet for a time, and then said, "You won't deceive me, will you, Marian? It is not a plot of yours and James's to say this just to pacify me? You will be his wife?"

"I will, his faithful wife, please God," said Marian, solemnly.

"Call him 'husband,' then—just for once, that I may hear it."

"My husband," said Marian, lingering lovingly on the name.

"My own dear wife," said James, in a voice broken with emotion.

"Thank Heaven!" said Alice, "now I shall sleep."

She pressed their hands over her heart, and there was silence. At last she murmured faintly, "It is growing lighter now!" They believed she had fallen asleep. And she had fallen asleep indeed, and was not to wake again.

And so James and Marian were betrothed, and their united hands were laid upon a broken heart for an altar.

They sat all through the long hours of night in this way, fearing to move lest they should disturb poor Alice's slumbers. But when the dawn broke, and they could see her face, they knew that the sleep she was sleeping was not to be broken by earthly noises. And Marian knew her sister was gone, and she flung herself into James's arms, and wept upon his shoulder. He led her away from the dead, until the first agony of her grief was over. Then he took her back to the bedside, and showed her what a calm, sweet smile there was on the face, and how it had lost the worn and wasted look, and seemed young and fair once more.

"That is peace," he whispered. And Marian felt it was peace, and her grief was comforted somewhat, for that bitterness of death which she had feared had been spared to that unhappy sister of hers—and of us all!

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## CHAPTER LV

### "TILL DEATH DO US PART!"

SPRING at last! The long weary winter was over, and nature was waking from her sleep. There were clumps of primroses in sheltered nooks, and the osier beds were gay with golden catkins. The woods were just brightening with the early leaf buds, and the colour of the springing corn was discernible in a faint film of green on the fields. The birds began to sing in the hedgerows, and the lambs skipped merrily in the pastures.

And in a very few days how the tiny green buds swelled and

opened into little leaves, and how rapidly the little leaves grew and spread as the sap coursed along. You could almost see the green fans of the horse-chestnuts grow as you watched them.

The fields were so fresh and bright with the young grass. Here and there you saw little patches that seemed to have borrowed their colour from the clear skies above—but it was only the bluebells. The graceful ferns put forth their quaint clubs, like augurs' staffs, foretelling summer.

Every now and then the air would darken, and there would be the sudden whispering of showers among the leaves, but they did not last long. Away sailed the watery cloud, often with a rainbow fringing its skirts, and then all around would twinkle with the lavish diamond-drops. And for every shower that obscured the heavens for a space, there would come greener leaves, and taller stems, and bigger blossoms, so that you almost loved to hear the pattering of the rain for the sake of the store of loveliness it was laying up for to-morrow.

It was April—the real spring month, when all the most wonderful phenomena of Nature's re-awakening are to be observed. March is the babyhood of the year. It lies helpless almost in the arms of winter, and if it were not for the violets that are its eyes, you would think it was asleep. But April is the childhood of the year, with all its smiles and frowns, developing fresh traits, and displaying new power and intelligence every day, as children do.

It is April, that comes in with a handful of primroses, and leaves behind it cowslips and cuckoo-flowers as a remembrance. April always reminds me of Ophelia—laughter in tears, tricked out with pretty wreaths and flowery fancies.

In speaking of spring and April, I find I have wandered into a description of their beauties as displayed in the country. But it is not of the country that I am about to write.

Spring and April visit the humble suburb where the church and school of St. Pacifica preside over modest tenements and "eligible sites for building." There is a pleasant odour of lilacs on the air, and here and there a laburnum begins to hint at the showers of gold it will droop with by-and-by.

During the winter the male denizens of this quiet suburb have been compelled to give up their sederunts in shirt-sleeves and back gardens. There has been no clicking about of pattens in the yards, for the washes have all been dried indoors, filling the habitations with a satisfying warm steam that makes the babies, where there are babies in the case, assume the appearance of a well-cooked potato.

It has been hard times in many of these little dwellings. The winter is a sore trial for the struggling poor. Things are

dear, and there is not much work to be had, and coals rise every week, but have to be bought every week as a rule nevertheless, for the want of a little capital to invest in a small stock. What is worse, where some extra prudent wife has, with a view to the washing she takes in, put by a little store of money to get in a ton, the chances are she has been cheated out of it. A handsomely-dressed and civil spoken gentleman, with a flower in his button-hole, and his hat very much on one side, has paid a polite visit, and declared himself to be the agent of some large and well-known firm of coal merchants. He has, so he says, orders to come round with a view to accommodating small purchasers who can't buy when coals rise, and he is prepared to send in a ton—even less—of the best coals at a mere nominal sum, it being autumn, and large supplies looked for from the mines. And perhaps the poor woman is deluded into ordering some; and if she pays the gentleman traveller for them on the spot, sees no more of him from that day forth; but if she undertakes to pay on delivery, she finds when the money has gone, and the man who brought the coals has gone, that she has been supplied with an article which would be invaluable if she wanted to reslate the roof, but is quite useless as fuel.

So what with hard times and dishonest times, April is very welcome when it brings sunshine to the struggling neighbourhood of St. Pacifica's.

The shirt-sleeves appear in the back garden, but take to active occupations—digging, hoeing and raking. The back gardens become netted across and across with twine, as if the dwarf walls were playing at cat's-cradle. But it is only a provision for expected scarlet-runners. A great deal of trouble is taken to adorn the beds with fluttering rags of bright cloth tied to sticks of firewood. This is done in the fond belief that it will deter the sparrows from eating the seeds. It is a vain delusion. The London sparrow is too familiar with man to be frightened at a scarecrow—much less at a shred of cloth. You might as well try to frighten a London street boy with the threat of a policeman. The cats, who have begun, now that April has come, to bask on the walls once more, must exercise all their cunning to catch Master Sparrow. As for the mongrel dogs, who always watch their masters digging, with an air of intense wonder at such unusual energy, they may bark at the sparrows when they see them picking all the beans out of the ground, but the bold birds don't care. If the cur runs at them, they just fly another foot from him, and begin gardening again.

The field which lies adjacent to the school-yard, having

probably never seen such a thing as a primrose for years, does not attempt to mark spring in that way. But the turf, which is rather threadbare and out at elbows, like the best suit in the neighbourhood, tries to keep up an appearance, and is really green in places. The four daisies and the twelve dandelions which adorn it, do their best to impress you with the notion that there are flowers about. The sticklebacks in the stagnant pools are in full force, giving great sport. They bite tremendously, and expert fishermen are reported to have caught as many as six in half an hour—not to mention three more which were jerked out of the water, but dropped off.

One day in April there is great excitement at St. Pacifica's. The school-room is like a garden, so full is it of all sorts of early flowers. The children are to have a holiday and a great treat. Some of the more bold and enterprising spirits hang about the school and snatch furtive peeps of the interior arrangements. Tommy Wiggles declares—and is prepared to make that declaration on oath—that he saw a plum cake on the table as large as the top of his (Tom Wiggles's) mother's copper. This statement I am bound to admit, is not received unreservedly by the youth of Pacifica's. Nor does Billy Drake, whose brother is apprenticed to Mr. Bocking, the baker, and who alleges on that brother's authority that penny buns have been ordered in by the gross, obtain much credence. It is whispered that he has invented the story in order to draw attention to the fact that his brother is in daily contact with penny buns, and possibly even with raspberry three-corners. There is no doubt about the three large black kettles, because they were seen going in ; and indeed the handles of two them, together with part of their spouts, are visible to the naked eye as they stand in the window seat. A concourse of mugs, and one of the largest assemblages of plates on record in the parish, have also been marked down as arriving at the school-house.

A large barrel of beer has arrived, and also a few bottles of spirits, by special permission of the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth, who explains to James Trefusis that he despises the teetotal movement, and places no faith in gentlemen who bandage themselves with blue ribbon, and make a special glory of practising one out of many virtues which are simply the duties of every man. But the Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth does not wish to encourage drinking, and is very severe on the point of rum as a substitute for milk, disapproving strongly of tea being considered—as it is by a good many of the female population hereabouts—in the light of a vehicle for the best Jamaica.

There is to be a tea for the children and their fathers and mothers, with a magic lantern and some fireworks in the evening. And as Peggy Dobbs, who owes his name Peggy to the fact that one of his legs is of wood, is invited, the general belief goes that there may be a dance. For Peggy Dobbs, having no children, can have no claim to be asked, except that he plays on the fiddle; an accomplishment he acquired in the navy, where he lost his leg—not in action, but by tumbling down the hold with a barrel of salt pork.

"And the occasion," you ask, "of all this?"

Don't ask me. Ask one of those happy-looking youngsters—so happy that they don't mind having clean faces, even to the extent of a high soapy polish.

"Oh, if you please, Teacher's going to be married!"

Yes, James and Marian are to wed this bright April morning. April, the delightful month, when sun and shade mingle—when storm and sunshine alternate, as they do in our lives—is the fittest month of all for a marriage. There is no truth in the old rhyme—there seldom is any soundness in old proverbs—about the happiness of the bride on whom the sun shines. Not a bit of it: the sun can't always shine. The happiest bride must learn that the most blessed wedded life is April weather. Let her take shower and shine together on the one day of her life that she will remember till her dying hour—every incident of which, every glimmer of sunlight, every twinkle of rain-drops, shall be clear in her memory, until the loosening of the silver cord and the breaking of the golden bowl.

As they walk to church, the rich incense of grateful earth, returning thanks for a bounteous shower, fills the air with sweetness. But the sun is out, and the only drops that fall are flashing diamonds, that glitter brightly on the eaves before they drop to earth.

It is a very humble wedding. Mrs. Bartlett and Mrs. Warner accompany Marian; her bridesmaids are her three oldest pupils at St. Pacifica's. They are all dressed very nicely but very quietly. Marian has a plain straw bonnet, with a white ribbon, a fawn-coloured shawl, and a dove-coloured silk dress. She might be a Quakeress, so simply is she attired.

James goes to church with Charlie Crawhall; and the old Captain of Artillery is to give away the bride. James is looking almost young again; and when Marian, coming in, sees him standing at the altar steps, she thinks that he never looked so tall before.

The Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth is to perform the

ceremony. He is not "assisted" by anybody, though I believe he needs it more than a good many of the reverend gentlemen who require the aid of two or three brother clerics to get through the service, if the marriage announcements in the *Times* mean anything. The Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth is very much affected, and nearly breaks down, for Teacher was a great favourite of his, and he knows when she is married she is to go away from them. Marian has been a long time at the school, and is greatly beloved. Old pupils, who have left long since, and who are married or in service, come to see Teacher's wedding, and cry their eyes out in their simple way, as if she were condemned thereby to utter misery, instead of fulfilling the one hope of her life.

In spite of chokes and coughs, which are sobs in another form, the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth reads the noble service very impressively: and there is only one mistake throughout, and that is committed by James, who apparently is so eager to assert his determination to make Marian his wife, that he says "I will!" with great emphasis directly the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth asks him if he will have her for his wedded wife, and without waiting until he has completed the sentence. Nobody smiles, however, for there is something too solemn in the occasion. These two people are not children, uniting their fortunes blindly. James's hair is grizzled, and there are silver streaks in Marian's smooth plaits. A man and woman who have loved in spite of separation, and who have overcome all impediments—are about to join their lives—their hearts—their souls—their whole being. "Amen!" The ceremony is over.

The two bells of St. Pacifica's begin to ring like mad. They tinkle away at express speed, under the impression that careless observers may take them for a peal. And there is great rejoicing and hand-shaking, and then all adjourn to the school-room.

You see my people are humble people. I can't give you a breakfast from Gunter's, and therefore you must be content to sit down in the school where Marian has taught and laboured so long.

How happy everybody is till the time comes for James and Marian to leave. They are going down to dear old Cornwall for a week, and then take ship for the New World, where their future life lies.

"Good-bye—God bless you both!" is all that the Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth can find power to say. And Charlie Crawhall and the captain wring James's hand in silence, while Mrs. Bartlett and Mrs. Warner are taking heart-breaking leave

of Marian. And then the children have to bid Teacher farewell; and during that she fairly breaks down, for each of them has some little speech, or promise, or memory of old times for her. Even Jack Banks, the dunce of the school, who never could master his "duty towards his neighbour," promises to struggle with that portion of his Catechism till he gets it off, and says, "when he's a man, he'll come over to Horsetailor, and say it to Teacher." So farewell to all—from the biggest girl in the school, Mary Middleton, who goes out to service next week to a certain Mrs. Bartlett's, who is a good mistress, down to little Polly Martin, who is too young to learn to spell, and is taught orally therefore, but cannot be persuaded that "forgive us our grasshoppers" is not a passage of the Lord's prayer.

"Good-bye all! And now I am yours, James! A poor gift, my darling," and she looks up tenderly in his face as he strokes her head. "Ah, James, it is a silver head——"

"But a golden heart!" he breaks in. "A golden heart, tried and fined again and again in the fierce furnace of tribulation, but true gold!"

"It is all yours, James!"

So she goes away on her husband's arm, smiling through her tears on this April day, when all trace of Marian Carlyon is lost, but the world is blest with a Marian Trefusis.

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## CHAPTER LVI.

### THE CLEARING.

I AM drawing near that inevitable line which must be the last boundary of every story. I have to dismiss my people, not without regret, for I have grown to feel an interest in every one of them—even the worst. Let us take a glance at the list of *dramatis personæ*, and see what becomes of them.

There was an inquest, of course, on the body of Henry Cormack, at Wheal Cormack, with the intelligent and experienced Mr. Lusky as foreman, and they brought in a verdict of "Accidental death," combined with a censure on "the person concerned in the erection of the engine-house and engine"—which, in point of fact, was a censure on the deceased, only Dr. Johns did not discover it.

Mr. Creech, Cormack's solicitor, announced that there was no will. A draft had been prepared, but had not been executed. Who was to have the property? Cormack, you



remember, was one of those men who appear to spring up spontaneously—who have no father, mother, or relatives—a “kindless villain.” Creech advertised for the next of kin, and two or three claimants came forward; and there was litigation in Chancery; and, finally, what was got over the devil’s back was spent under his belly—in other words the lawyers sacked the ill-won estate.

The Foundry passed into the hands of a Joint-Stock Company (Limited). Shares in the Polvrehan Ironworks and Steam Foundry are, I see by to day’s *Times*, at a premium. A large mining company has sprung up on the moors; “Wheal Cormacks” are quoted at fabulous prices; and there are several other dividend-paying mines in its immediate vicinity. Polvrehan is the property of a gentleman from Salisbury, who is a great mining adventurer, and has made a large fortune out of this new district. He has enlarged the house considerably, and has added a tower, which you can see from one of the high viaducts on the Cornwall Railway as you look up the valley of the Rella.

Lord Lacquoigne, I grieve to say, appears to be a very great invalid. He lives a good deal abroad, and is almost forgotten in society, but his name is to be met with frequently in the advertisements of patent medicines. It is from those sources that I learn that, after five years of agony from dyspepsia and nervous depression, his lordship was restored to health by taking Puffin’s Vegetable Pills; and that congestion of the liver must have eventually removed him from this world had not a friend recommended him to try Crammer’s Ointment, which gave him immediate relief. It is from these facts, as set forth in his grateful testimonials to the efficacy of these medicines (signed “Your obedt. servt., Lacquoigne”), that I gather he is an invalid. He has suffered tortures from neuralgia, until he resolved to try Boshier’s Nervolenitive. He has been unable to walk until Baron Bounce extracted his corns; and (I have a faint impression) after becoming bald (in consequence probably of the pain he suffered from his teeth or his toes), had a fine crop of hair produced in a week by Swindall’s Formula. Rude people have told me that his lordship is in robust health, and never takes physic, but that he pens these testimonials “for a consideration;” but such an explanation is too wildly improbable. I fear there is more truth in the rumour that, the aristocratic nose having been brought to the grindstone by poverty, her ladyship is the author of the mysterious announcement that “a lady of title, moving in good society, will engage to introduce ladies and gentlemen into the first circles, etc., etc., etc.” There are so

many snobs dying to get into high life—so anxious to insinuate themselves among the swells—that they will pay any price to the person who will get the thin end of the wedge in for them. No doubt her ladyship, putting her aristocratic nose to that use, makes a fair amount of money.

Mrs. Orr has grown very fat and very pious. She has to be wheeled about in a Bath chair, from which she dispenses to passers-by, of whose lives and characters she knows nothing, agreeable tracts, which announce definitely that they are going to a warm climate—not in the Tropics—at express speed. She lives in good style, which her means, though comfortable, do not seem adequate to maintain. But it must be remembered she collects for charities, and is a treasurer of various funds, and, as she is very humble-minded now, that is profitable. For you see, when she gets a donation of ten pounds for a mission to convert the heathen, she has only in pious self-depreciation to look upon herself in the light of a heathen, and her claim to five pounds out of the ten is indubitable.

The Hon. Mrs. Henry Vorian is, so Mrs. Orr says, worldly and carnal-minded. She is very fond of Bath and Cheltenham, where she finds a certain sort of society which admits her. The pinkness of her eyes has extended to her nose now, which is very sharp and spiky. She likes curaçoa, but has been known in the absence of liqueurs (a thing not uncommon in her own establishment) to put up with the neat gin of her native land. For a time she tried to fascinate, but as the only conquest she made was an old Admiral with a gouty foot, who would take port wine, and having taken port wine would take liberties, which her sensitive nature was horrified at—he actually kissed her once, and wanted her to sit on the knee that wasn't gouty—she abandoned the notion, and went in for whist and tabbies.

Her son, who is spoilt by his mother and his grandmother, is a promising youth. He only resembles his father in the worst and weakest points of his character. When patent medicines can no longer snatch Lord Lacquoigne from the clutches of death, the Hon. Henry Orr Vorian will be raised to the peerage, of which he will doubtless become a distinguished ornament. The women have ruined him in the bringing up. He doesn't hunt, or shoot, or boat. He won't go to the University, or take a commission. He is simply a fast man about town—so fast that he may outstrip his lordship, and die before him.

Of Major Cantlow the traces are not very easy to follow. After his disappearance from Boulogne, he is not to be found until he turns up as a fortunate speculator at Wiesbaden. A

suspicion of his play in a game at *écarté* leads a young German to challenge him, and he is so pressing in his invitation that the major can't get out of the difficulty except by calling in the police. He gets off fighting by this means, but has to leave Wiesbaden. From this time he turns up at intervals wherever billiard balls rattle or gold coins glisten on green cloth. Finally, he is seen in Paris, under the name of Captain Cantley, winning heavily at a gambling table in a house on one of the Quais. He leaves with a large sum in gold and notes, and from that day seems to have abjured play, for he is never seen again. But about this time, anyone curious in these matters might have seen, in visiting the Morgue, the corpse of an elderly man, with an aquiline nose, and a long, gray moustache, a stony eye, and a pale complexion. There were no marks of violence observable on the body, as it lay on its back on the slab, with the cold stream of water trickling over it. But had you lifted it and turned it over, you would have seen a gaping gash—the mark of a stab with a poignard—under the left shoulder blade. It was found in the Seine. The pockets had been emptied, and there were no means of identification. But the porter of a lodging-house, missing a lodger, and, like a wise Parisian, dropping in here, recognised the English gentleman who lived *au second* at his house—"an ex-officer, Capitaine Cantley, of the Armée Britannique."

Mrs. Bartlett and Mrs. Warner have become fast friends, and have gone into partnership in a large private hotel in St. James's.

Mrs. Bartlett's old lodging-house in Duke Street has been taken off her hands by a gentleman who was "own gentleman" to a nobleman who had chambers there. My lord's gentleman retired from the proud occupation of waiting on his lordship in order to marry Mrs. Bartlett's servant, Mary Middleton, and set up as lodging-house keeper.

Mrs. Bartlett and Mrs. Warner are making a great deal of money by their private hotel, which is admirably conducted. They have only had one unpleasantness since they opened it. A foreign gentleman and lady came to reside there—the Count and Countess de Varignan—but they had not been there a week before they were taken up for being concerned in the forgery of French notes. On the trial it came out that so far from being the Count and Countess of Varignan, they were mere adventurers, who were not even married. The man was transported: the woman, who turned Queen's evidence, was acquitted, but as she disappeared mysteriously soon afterwards, it was conjectured that some of the gang had taken vengeance on her for betraying them. She had at one time

opened a bonnet-shop in Pimlico, under the name of Delamere, at which time she was living with the proprietor of a café in Soho. He got into difficulties, and left the country. Miss Delamere became bankrupt, and was lost sight of until she emerged as a full-blown countess.

I am glad to see it announced that the Bishop of London has given a city living value £400 per annum to the Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth. The Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth is an enviably lucky man for a parson who hasn't a living in his family. He has only been a curate in the poor and populous parish of St. Pacifica's five-and-twenty years, so that this recognition of his deserts comes surprisingly early.

Bohemia and its inhabitants are where they were when first James Trefusis wandered into the kindly land. Radical and revolutionary in theory, Bohemia is conservative in practice. It goes on in the same way for ever, and its sons never seem to change or grow old. Charlie Crawhall still paints pictures, and plays on his colour harmonicon. Dr. Long still believes that his plan of trephining must eventually be adopted by the faculty, while Harry Ryder continues to add last touches to the great epic, "Cromwell." Groeller's opera is not accepted yet, but that is partly because he has not quite completed it. Kiste disappears now and then, as of old, and then drops in some quiet evening, and says he has been in Central Africa, or the interior of Australia, since he was there last. Mark Latrowe is illustrating "Blue Blazes Ben, or the Young Burglar," which is issued in weekly numbers, price one penny—"No. 1, with which is given away, gratis, No. 2, and a magnificent engraving of the boy burglars burning the police station, now ready!" Jack Latrowe, after a more than ordinarily audacious "do," retired from Bohemia, and is keeping an inn somewhere in the country.

And now I have but one thing more to show you. It is an Australian scene. There's a large clearing, in which are clustered log farm-buildings. There is a pleasantly prosperous look about it, and everyone on the place seems happy and contented.

It is called New Polvrehan, and the owner, Mr. James Trefusis, is a rich man. He has worked steadily, and fortune has smiled on him. He might return to England, if he chose, now, and live like a prince. But he does not care about returning to England. The years he passed there were years of doubt, and trial, and anguish. The years he has spent in Australia are years of unclouded sunshine. His children have sprung up around him, to make this little clearing in the wilderness a world for him.

You would hardly recognise our old friend James. He is sunburnt and sinewy, and looks ten years younger than when last we saw him. His wife is a plump, pleasant body, with a cheery voice that is always singing over the work. Time with her, too, seems to have put back the hands some years.

There are three girls—Alice, and Marian, and Hannah; and two boys, James and Charles.

It is April—but not spring. The glories of autumn gild the scene. It is the peaceful close of the year; it is the calmfulness of middle age.

"Do you know what to-day is, dear?" says the plump little woman, looking up from the table on which she is laying out damper and tea.

"Tuesday, my lass."

"But the day of the month, James?"

"Our wedding-day, to be sure. Do you think I'd forgotten it? Not a bit—I've been thinking of it all day while I was out after the cattle. I've brought you something home as a present."

"What is it?" says Marian, wonderingly, for she knows there are no shops where presents could be got for many a score of miles.

"Come here and see."

She goes up to him, and he folds her in his arms and kisses her on the forehead.

"There, that's what I've brought you. Have you nothing for me?"

She reaches up, and kisses him on the lips.

Then Alice, their first-born, comes in—and, as by one impulse, they both go to her and embrace her. She is the only delicate child they have—but it is not on that account that they thus fondle her. The memory of a poor, broken heart, at rest in Highgate Cemetery, far away across the ocean, in old England, makes them regard their eldest child with more than ordinary tenderness.

The other children come in, for the evening meal is ready, and the sun is setting. It is a peaceful autumn evening.

The bright rays of departing day brighten the scene. They touch Marian's locks, and transmute the silver of her hair to gold. But no sun, nor shade, nor trouble, nor happiness can transmute the golden heart that has been purified by affliction!

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